

PLAYING RAMEAU ON THE PIANO:
THE SUITE IN A MINOR FROM *NOUVELLES SUITES DE PIÈCES DE CLAVECIN*

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AUDIO EXCERPTS

As part of my study, I recorded excerpts of the A-minor suite on the piano. I have done so in order to clearly communicate my musical ideas because there is a limit to how much words can convey. Excerpts consist of the first section from each movement. I will refer to these excerpts along with figures in the discussions in chapter three.

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12. Gavotte, fifth variation, mm. 1-8
13. Gavotte, sixth variation, mm. 1-8

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Need for this Study

It was from my interest in early music that I decided to take harpsichord lessons during my studies in piano. While I enjoyed the beautiful sonority of the harpsichord and its literature, especially that of the French Baroque, I encountered two questions as a pianist. Why is early music not often played on the piano? If pianists were to adopt early repertoire, what is the nature of pieces that would adapt well for the piano? When I heard a piano performance of a Rameau keyboard suite at a concert, I became certain that his keyboard works could successfully be adapted and that pianists need not be restricted to Johann Sebastian Bach and a few other masters when exploring the Baroque and pre-Baroque literature. A search of the Naxos Music Library revealed that works by Jean-Philippe Rameau, played by pianists, are quite limited.

The purpose of my study is to introduce Rameau's A-minor suite from *Nouvelles suites de pièces de clavecin* to pianists and to provide performing suggestions for a successful adaptation of the work to the piano. Accompanying my writing, an appendix includes my audio recording of excerpts from the suite on the piano. The purpose of this effort is to articulate my interpretative decisions aurally on the piano, which I believe is the most efficient method of conveying musical ideas.

Learning about performance practices and the instrument for which any composition is written are essential steps in appreciating and understanding the work. The knowledge gained from the process expands and illuminates performers' choices in their interpretation. Of course,

trying to understand the composer's intentions also informs one's own interpretation. While some composers left us specific comments about their creations, an ability to decode and extract the intentions of the composer from music scores is a necessary skill of a successful musician. Early music is often challenging as many composers left little and/or inconsistent performance indications. Performances that reflect the historical practice, and ideas suggested by the composer can be both beautiful and rewarding as well as intellectually convincing.

The same process applies when adapting a composition for another instrument. The method of delivering the piece may vary; however, the performer should be informed by the background of the composition and strive to convey the intentions of the composer. For the purpose of my study, I have learned the A-minor suite on both the harpsichord and the piano. Learning the piece on the period instrument has provided me further experience and insight as I explore the roots of the composition.

Some may argue that harpsichord literature should be played solely on the harpsichord. In my view, it is simply a matter of personal preference. Classical musicians have a tradition of borrowing literature written for another medium. There is no reason why pianists cannot borrow harpsichord literature. Especially in these modern days in which a piano is commonplace but a harpsichord is not, it makes sense to play early music on the piano when appropriate. Viola and double-bass players often borrow from the cello literature, and percussionists play piano literature for marimba. Harpists as well frequently play works written for the piano. Needless to say, playing works originally composed for a different instrument is not without precedent. Different instrumentation brings a whole new sound and new challenges because of the instrument's timbre, capabilities, and limitations. It is an exciting endeavor and should not be discouraged.

A study discussing the performance of Rameau's keyboard works on the piano is much needed. Numerous writings on Rameau are focused on his operas and theoretical treatises. Although Rameau's theories have been discussed by many scholars, his keyboard works have not generated detailed commentaries or analyses. Similarly in concert settings and lessons, Rameau's keyboard works are seldom played by pianists today. From my experience, it is not surprising that many pianists seem to be familiar with Rameau only from history textbooks and from his accomplishments in music theory. In contrast, keyboard works of Rameau's contemporaries outside of France, such as J. S. Bach and Domenico Scarlatti, are considered as standard piano repertoire and are frequently heard in concerts.

Serious pianists are almost always required to study the keyboard music of J. S. Bach in particular. When pianists are not introduced to various international styles of the Baroque music, they may blindly apply the performance practice they have learned from Bach's works to all Baroque music. The nature of French Baroque music is distinctively different from that of Bach's writing. Rameau's music exemplifies the height of the French Baroque and requires a different approach to interpret it. Rameau's keyboard works deserve more attention especially from pianists; pianists who wish to expand their repertoire should consider Rameau among other French Baroque composers without being discouraged by unfamiliar performance practices and notation. It is my hope that my writing and recording excerpts will be an introduction to Rameau's keyboard works for piano players and a starting point for interpretation.

Authenticity in performance is an important theme in my writing. As presented in *Grove Music Online*, the term authenticity has been a subject of discussion among scholars.¹ John Butt

¹ John Butt, "Authenticity," *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, (Oxford University Press), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/46587> (accessed November 13, 2014).

lists six approaches to an authentic performance that may be employed individually or in any combination:

Use of instruments from the composer's own era; use of performing techniques documented in the composer's era; performance based on the implications of the original sources for a particular work; fidelity to the composer's intentions for performance or to the type of performance a composer desired or achieved; an attempt to re-create the context of the original performance; and an attempt to re-create the musical experience of the original audience.²

In my discussion, the term authenticity refers to being informed of performance practices of the composer's time and the context in which the composition was performed as well as making an effort to reflect on the overall effect the composer may have wished to achieve. My usage of the term here is not intended to challenge other views on this subject and redefine the term. However, my usage of the term does deviate from an emphasis on correctness of the instrument, its techniques, and other aspects of musical performance and experience.

Review of Literature

For a comprehensive discussion of interpreting Rameau's keyboard music, I have consulted sources in three general categories: background information regarding the composer and his works, primarily the keyboard suites; French performance practices during the time of Rameau; and the harpsichord and its performance technique. A majority of the sources here are books; numerous articles and dissertations on Rameau concern the composer's theoretical and stage works, which are not applicable to my study. I have also briefly reviewed existing recordings of Rameau's A-minor suite performed on the piano.

² John Butt, "Authenticity," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*. We struggle in the twenty-first century to know exactly what the composer meant through notation. It is even more difficult to imagine a performer's interpretation or an audience's perception of the sound in that day.

There are a number of keyboard literature books available that provide general information on Rameau as well as his career and output. Rameau is treated as a significant composer of keyboard music in *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music* by John Gillespie and *A History of Keyboard Literature* by Stewart Gordon. These books summarize the highlights of the composer's career, compositions, and writings, which are the essential preliminary knowledge for my study. Other keyboard literature books written specifically for pianists include *Masters of the Keyboard* by Willi Apel, *Music for the Piano* by James Friskin and Irwin Freundlich, and *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire* by Maurice Hinson. These sources reveal that scholars have long considered Rameau's keyboard works suitable for the piano, contrary to current practice. The significance of Rameau's keyboard works acknowledged by these authors is noteworthy for my study because the composer is known primarily for his operas and theoretical writings.

More detailed accounts of Rameau can be found in *Jean-Philippe Rameau: His Life and Work* by Cuthbert Girdlestone and "Rameau, Jean-Philippe," an entry from *Grove Music Online* by Graham Sadler and Thomas Christensen. Both sources provide a comprehensive guide to Rameau as a multifaceted musician including his biography and discussions of his works.

French Baroque Music from Beaujoyeux to Rameau by James Anthony is more detailed regarding Rameau's music than the sources on keyboard literature mentioned above, and a valuable source of the musical trends of Rameau's time across different genres and medium. In the passages about Rameau, Anthony discusses the possible sources of inspiration for Rameau's compositions as well as the unique traits of his music. According to Anthony, Rameau was one of the few composers who maintained his originality and did not become an imitator of Couperin

the Great.³ Information on Rameau is also included in Anthony's discussion of stage works, which provides a more complete understanding of his musical style.

The second category of sources refers to the performance practices utilized in the eighteenth century when Rameau's A-minor suite was composed. In *Performing French Classical Music*, Timothy Schultz provides a performance edition and commentaries on François Chauvon's *Premiere Suite*, along with a discussion of performance practice. Schultz first discusses the issues of historical performance practice in several chapters such as instrumentation, ornamentation, and articulation and phrasing. The author then moves into a performance guide to Chauvon's suite followed by the performance edition of the piece. In this part of the book, Schultz organizes chapters by the movements of the suite. The format of my discussion largely follows Schultz's with an addition of several elements, including performance suggestions on the piano. Schultz's choice of dedicating his book to a single work, written within the same cultural framework as Rameau's suite, and organization of the chapters, serves as a model for my study.

Keyboard Interpretation from the 14th to the 19th Century by Howard Ferguson concisely discusses keyboard literature and how to approach different aspects of keyboard performance such as tempo and ornaments. The author points to the issues that arise when playing early music on the modern piano and provides suggestions in order to avoid anachronism. The chapter is valuable because, not only does Ferguson prescribe what to do and what not to do in piano playing, he also discusses aesthetics of earlier times, encouraging performers to achieve a certain overall sound and mood.

³ James R. Anthony, *French Baroque Music from Beaujoyeulx to Rameau*, rev. and expanded ed. (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, c1997), 317, <http://proxy.bsu.edu/login?url=http://www.netlibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=45761> (accessed November 13, 2014).

In the *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Frederick Neumann provides a comprehensive view on the topic in his detailed discussions of tempo, rhythm, dynamics, articulation, phrasing, and ornamentation. Neumann is a leading scholar of performance practices of early music and has published numerous books and articles. Sections on rhythm and ornamentation are organized into separate chapters according to nationalistic styles. Most chapters here, particularly those on French style, will be a primary guide for my discussion of performance practices during the time of Rameau.

Another book by Neumann, *Essays in Performance Practice*, explores similar subjects as the book mentioned above. There is significant overlap between these books; however the essays titled “Misconceptions About the French Trill in the 17th and 18th Centuries,” “Notes on ‘Melodic’ and ‘Harmonic’ Ornaments,” and “Couperin and the Downbeat Doctrine for Appoggiaturas” provide further insights into French practices. In the chapter on Couperin, some of Neumann’s methods on analyzing and applying ornaments, and most importantly, his perception of Couperin’s attitude toward music relate very much to the music of Rameau.

Neumann traces the increased interest in early music in “The Rise of the Early Music Movement,” the first chapter of *New Essays on Performance Practice*. The chapter “Some Controversial Aspects of the Authenticity School” points out that notable performers and scholars in the early-music movement did not always promote accurate performance practices or period instruments despite their contributions to modern musicology. These essays allow me to become more critical of works and performances of the masters of the early-music movement and to better seek and understand the intentions of Rameau.

In *A Performer’s Guide to Baroque Music*, Robert Donington discusses a wide range of topics concerning Baroque music. The topics beyond the notes on the score are beneficial for my

study: “The Baroque Attitude” and “The Baroque Sound.” Donington points out the importance of spontaneity in performance, clarity and transparency of sound, and style. In pursuing the original sound of Rameau, it is paramount that musicians understand expectations placed upon the performer and the desirable sound during the first part of the eighteenth century, and not assume that today’s standards in music necessarily apply.

In *Authenticity in Performance: Eighteenth-Century Case Studies*, Peter le Huray selects works from the Baroque and Classical styles and discusses several points concerning what musicians should consider for an authentic performance. Although le Huray’s research has been brought into question by several reviewers including David Montgomery, the first chapter, “The Spirit of Authenticity” provides guidance to anyone who wishes to interpret a piece of music in an authentic manner and is referenced in my discussion.⁴ The author discusses what it means to be authentic and argues that performers should not be distracted by correct ways or rules of playing. Rather, it is the analysis of the piece and the understanding of the original setting in which the piece was written and performed that will reveal the possibilities for performance decisions.

A spirit of exploring early music is also expressed in *The Interpretation of Music* by Thurston Dart. The book presents the challenges of performing early music and the important roles of the editor and performer while summarizing various styles from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century. First published in 1954, Dart’s scholarship has been challenged by Frederick Neumann and others in matters such as French overture style.⁵ However, Dart’s attitude toward

⁴ For an example of how le Huray’s work is viewed, see David Montgomery, review of *Authenticity in Performance: Eighteenth-Century Case Studies*, by Peter le Huray, and *New Essays on Performance Practice*, by Frederick Neumann, *The Musical Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 264-282.

⁵ For an example of the scholarly disagreements, see Frederick Neumann, “Rhythmic Alterations II: The So-Called French Overture Style” in *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1993), 108-119.

authentic performance is still inspiring today and supports my thesis. Dart's comments, which are relevant to my study, reflecting his flexible approach to early music are found in chapters titled "The Problem," "Sonorities," "Style in the Eighteenth Century," and "Some Conclusions."

While reliable scholarship is essential in research, it is intriguing and perhaps necessary to consider the perspective of a performer when studying a performance aspect of early music.

Inside Early Music: Conversations with Performers by Bernard D. Sherman includes an interview concerning Baroque keyboard playing with renowned harpsichordist Gustav Leonhardt. One interview titled "One Should Not Make a Rule" touches upon controversial issues such as historical fingering, tuning, and change of manuals. Leonhardt also comments on the intricacy of harpsichord playing. His insights are valuable to my study; he understands subtle nuances in playing that only great performers can perceive.

The harpsichord and its playing techniques is the last category of sources I have consulted. *Early Keyboard Instruments*, by Edwin M. Ripin et al., provides information on period keyboard instruments. This collection of articles is useful in understanding and tracing the development of the harpsichord and spinet, as Rameau likely intended his keyboard works for these instruments, which were readily available in his day. The harpsichord and spinet vary depending on the region, maker, and time period. The author extensively discusses the instruments produced during Rameau's time in France.

A Guide to the Harpsichord by Ann Bond is an excellent introduction to harpsichord playing. Written especially for beginners who are already familiar with other keyboard instruments, mainly the piano, the book provides basic information concerning the instrument and its techniques, the styles of harpsichord literature up to the end of the eighteenth century, and performance issues. Bond's comparison between the harpsichord and the piano in the

construction, sound, and techniques is effective and will be referenced in my study. The chapter on the French style introduces representative genres and traces the development of style from the performer's point of view. Such knowledge leads to a more complete picture of the music scene in which Rameau spent his career.

Richard Troeger discusses the art of harpsichord and clavichord playing from the construction of the instruments, to temperament, to articulation, in his *Technique and Interpretation on the Harpsichord and Clavichord*. Troeger's references to a number of treatises provide a more complete understanding of instruments, performance practices, and aesthetics. As noted harpsichordist Kenneth Cooper mentions in the foreword of the book, Troeger targeted advanced students and professionals in music as his audience, unlike many of the historical treatises written for novice musicians. This book is vital to my study in order to approach Rameau's A-minor suite from a harpsichordist's point of view. Harpsichord techniques including accent placement, phrasing, timing, and articulation are explained by Troeger and have been compared with those of the piano in my study.

Only a couple of short essays on keyboard playing were written by Rameau himself as prefaces to his keyboard works. Translated into English, these essays are titled "On Playing Technique on the Harpsichord" and "Remarks on the Pieces in this Book and on the Different Styles of Music." Even though these writings are brief, Rameau's remark on tempi is worthwhile and should be acknowledged by performers. He instructs that most movements in the A-minor suite are to be played sprightly rather than slowly. Rameau also writes about proper harpsichord techniques where he emphasizes the natural movement of the body. His advice here is also important because I have studied the A-minor suite as a harpsichord player.

L'art de toucher le clavecin, or *Of The Art of Playing the Harpsichord*, is written by Rameau's contemporary, François Couperin. His writing is more substantial than that of Rameau and includes the information on French style, playing techniques, fingering, realizing ornaments, and short compositions. Knowledge of Couperin's ornaments is valuable to my study because he illustrates an ornament found in Rameau's A-minor suite that is not discussed by Rameau.⁶ While Rameau and Couperin represent the French Baroque, the composers have personal styles and ways of notating music. Because Rameau left only limited writing on the subject, incorporating ideas of a stylistically similar composer is necessary.

Six performers are known to have recorded Rameau's A-minor suite in its entirety on the piano.⁷ They are all accomplished pianists: Therese Dussaut, Stephen Gutman, Alexandre Tharaud, Angela Hewitt, Marcelle Meyer, and Denys Proshayev. Their performances reflect their personal tastes and their own understanding of French Baroque music. The possibility of playing this piece on the piano has been explored for some time, as the dates of the six recordings span from 1953 to 2006. However, with my experience at the harpsichord and familiarity with the A-minor suite, combined with the latest scholarship on performance practices, I would approach the composition differently from these pianists. For instance, I play the first movement, Allemande, with *notes inégales* whereas all but Tharaud do not. It also is likely that I was the first to record excerpts of the suite with the new Urtext edition published by Bärenreiter in 2004.⁸ Inferred from the placement of the note A in Allemande, m. 9.4 and other

⁶ François Couperin, *L'art de toucher le clavecin*, ed. Anna Linde, trans. Mevanwy Roberts (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1961), 25.

⁷ The recordings were listed on Naxos Music Library as of September 2014 and WorldCat as of November 2014 and obtained through purchase or loan.

⁸ Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Books of 1726/27 & 1741*, vol. 2 of *New Edition of the Complete Keyboard Works*, ed. Siegbert Rampe, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2004).

notes, these pianists used a score other than the one mentioned above.⁹ I envision a piano performance of French Baroque music that observes various performance practices but does not limit itself to one type of touch or to an effort to imitate the sound of the harpsichord.

Preliminary Information

Rameau's Life and Works

Unlike many masters of music, Rameau was no child prodigy. Rather, he is often described as a learned composer. The information presented below on Rameau's life and works is borrowed primarily from Girdlestone.¹⁰ When Rameau was a child, because he performed so poorly at school he was asked to leave, which ruined the hope of his parents to educate him in the law. Rather, Rameau was interested in composing and singing. For some time, young Rameau did not settle in one location. He earned appointments as a church organist for a period of time on many occasions, but little is known about him as a harpsichord player or teacher. Unfortunately, he did not always honor his contracts during his nomadic years. Rameau's younger brother, Claude, also seemed to possess the trait and held church positions in various cities.¹¹

Much more is written about Rameau around the time when he began to compose his stage works and onward. When Rameau finally settled in Paris around 1722, he remained in the city for the rest of his life. An opportunity arrived to establish himself as an opera composer when

⁹ The note in question from the Allemande appears as an eighth note rather than a sixteenth in the previous edition from Bärenreiter and some other editions published prior to the *New Edition*. For example, see Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Pièces de Clavecin Third Collection (ca. 1728): Nouvelles Suites de Pièces de Clavecin*, ed. Erwin R. Jacobi (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1959); Jean-Philippe Rameau, *The Complete Works for Solo Keyboard*, ed. Camille Saint-Saëns (1895; repr., Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1994).

¹⁰ Cuthbert Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau: His Life and Work*, rev. ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 2014). This work by Girdlestone is cited by a number of scholars and authors.

¹¹ Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau*, 1-4.

Alexis Piron, an author who was seeking a collaborator, suggested Rameau provide music for his plays. They continued working together on several occasions.¹² Following these collaborations, Rameau's first opera, *Hippolyte et Aricie*, premiered in 1733, when the composer was fifty years old. The opera was an immediate success even though this music filled with progressive sounds faced a strong opposition.¹³

Around the same time Rameau became acquainted with Le Riche de la Pouplinière, who was one of the wealthiest men in France and a powerful patron of arts and music, later becoming Rameau's patron.¹⁴ For more than two decades, Rameau directed an orchestra at the home of La Pouplinière. Likely other duties at La Pouplinière's were to provide and arrange music for the orchestra. It was also at the home of his patron where Rameau met a number of individuals who became influential in the composer's career including his librettists Gautier de Montdorge and Ballot de Sauvot.¹⁵ The circle of friends at La Pouplinière's became a stronghold of Rameau supporting *ramistes*, against the supporters of Lully, *lullistes*.¹⁶ The music scene in this climate was divided into two camps: the longstanding musical tradition established by Lully versus the innovative and new style of Rameau that incorporated Italian taste. Rameau himself did not despise Lully; he admired this master composer and worked to prove to the public his utmost respect for Lully.¹⁷ Rameau's and La Pouplinière's relationship deteriorated when La Pouplinière's mistress moved into the residence, and Rameau and La Pouplinière eventually parted ways in 1753.¹⁸

¹² Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau*, 7-8.

¹³ Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau*, 481-482.

¹⁴ Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau*, 11.

¹⁵ Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau*, 475-477.

¹⁶ Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau*, 475; 482.

¹⁷ Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau*, 482-484.

¹⁸ Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau*, 480.

With the success of his operas, Rameau was commissioned to write for the court. In 1745, Rameau received a pension and the title of *Compositeur du Cabinet du Roi*.¹⁹ Rameau had been prolific; between the ages of fifty and seventy, he composed nearly twenty operas or ballets and published a number of theoretical writings and articles in the *Mercure de France*, the *Journal de Trévoux*, and *Le Pour et Contre*. While keeping himself busy with compositions and theoretical writings, Rameau was involved in multiple quarrels with musicians and scholars alike. An example is a dramatic quarrel between Rameau and a prominent Lullist, Pierre-Charles Roy, in 1737.²⁰

Only a few remarks on Rameau's personality and personal life were recorded. Rameau was often described as a critical, difficult person. As suggested above, he was quick to anger and prideful of his works.²¹ In response to the criticism, Rameau often fiercely replied in public with lengthy writing. In 1726, Rameau married Marie-Louise Mangot, a 19 year-old woman from Lyon. He was 42 at the time of marriage. The Mangots were a family of musicians, and Marie-Louise was described as gifted for music and performed in her husband's several operas, although not professionally. With four children, this couple was thought to be happily married.²² Despite his fame and successful career, Rameau's lifestyle was a simple one toward the end of his life. Rather than immersing himself in luxury, he appeared to be saving his fortune for his family despite his seemingly difficult personality.²³

Rameau continued to compose and write into his old age.²⁴ In addition to the aforementioned genres, Rameau composed chamber music, cantatas, and motets. For the solo

¹⁹ Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau*, 483.

²⁰ Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau*, 480-482.

²¹ Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau*, 514-515.

²² Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau*, 8.

²³ Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau*, 507.

²⁴ Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau*, 494.

keyboard genre, Rameau wrote three books of suites and some individual pieces. His keyboard music was written relatively early in his composing career, before many of his major works.

Premier livre de pièces de clavecin was published in 1705 or 1706, featuring a suite in A minor. The opening movement is an unmeasured prelude, which evokes the lute music as a predecessor of French keyboard music. Interestingly, the Allemandes bear a resemblance to the one from the *Nouvelle suite*.

Two suites in E minor and D major are included in *Pièces de clavessin avec une méthode pour la mécanique des doigts*, Rameau's second book of suites, published in 1724. In contrast with the suite from the first book, which consists of all dances except for one movement, the *Pièces de clavessin* contains an increased number of character pieces and *rondeaux*. Its preface is an essay on harpsichord playing technique, from which we can surmise that he was skilled at the instrument. Rameau emphasizes the importance of natural position and movement of the body when playing the instrument, and advises on how to practice in order to achieve proper technique.²⁵

Rameau's A-minor suite is included in his third book of keyboard suites, *Nouvelles suites de pièces de clavecin*, published in 1726 or 1727. Along with the A-minor suite, the *Nouvelles suites* also includes a suite in G major. The A-minor suite consists of seven movements: Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, "Les trois Mains," "Fanfarinette," "La Triomphante," and Gavotte with six variations. "Les trois Mains," "Fanfarinette," and "La Triomphante" are character pieces and carry about the same weight as the dance movements in the suite. While the Sarabande, "Fanfarinette," and "La Triomphante" are set in A major, the rest of the suite is written in the minor mode. Homophonic writing and sequences are frequently encountered. The

²⁵ Jean-Philippe Rameau, "On Playing Technique on the Harpsichord," in *Books of 1705/06 & 1724*, vol. 1 of *New Edition of the Complete Keyboard Works*, ed. Siegbert Rampe, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2004), 19-22.

forms used in this suite are binary, rondeau, and theme and variations. The Gavotte is quite virtuosic. The theme and writing style of the last movement suggests that Rameau was familiar with “Air with Variations” from Handel’s keyboard suite in E major, published in 1720.²⁶ The preface to this book is a commentary on selected movements and their interpretations.

Rameau’s second opera, *Les Indes galantes*, was arranged for the keyboard and appeared in print in 1735 or 1736. The arrangement includes the selected, more popular numbers from the opera, which are organized into four “concerts.”²⁷ One substantial individual piece by Rameau is *La Dauphine*. The piece is thought, without definitive evidence, to date from 1747.²⁸ It is assumed that Rameau wrote the music in relation to the wedding of the Dauphin Louis, a son of Louis XV and Princess Marie-Josèphe de Saxe of Dresden.²⁹

Following the keyboard suites and arrangements, the only set of chamber music by Rameau, *Pièces de clavecin en concerts*, was published in 1741. Here, the harpsichord is accompanied by the violin and viol. The keyboard part can also be played alone as a solo; Rameau claims that these pieces lose nothing by being played as such.³⁰ The violin may be replaced by the flute and the viol by a violin. The set contains five “concerts” consisting of several movements with some imaginative titles such as “L’Agaçante” and “L’Indiscrete.”

Even though Rameau’s keyboard works may not be part of the standard piano repertoire, they are discussed in a number of books concerning not only keyboard literature but also the narrower field of piano literature. Rameau is also often introduced as a significant contributor to

²⁶ Robert Marshall, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Keyboard Music*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 143.

²⁷ Siegbert Rampe, preface to *Les Indes Galantes Balet, réduit a quatre grands concerts (1735/36)*, vol. 3 of *New Edition of the Complete Keyboard Works*, by Jean-Philippe Rameau, ed. Siegbert Rampe, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2004), viii.

²⁸ Siegbert Rampe, preface to *The Books of 1705/6 and 1724*, vol. 1 of *New Edition of the Complete Keyboard Works*, by Jean-Philippe Rameau, ed. Siegbert Rampe, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2004), xiii.

²⁹ Rampe, preface to *1705/6 and 1724*, xiii.

³⁰ Jean-Philippe Rameau, “Notes to Performers,” in *Books of 1726/27 & 1741*, vol. 2 of *New Edition of the Complete Keyboard Works*, ed. Siegbert Rampe, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2004), 48.

the keyboard genre. In *Masters of the Keyboard*, Willi Apel supports the playing of early music on the piano and describes Rameau as François Couperin's successor in French keyboard music; he holds that Rameau's style is more Baroque and less Rococo than that of Couperin.³¹

Rameau's works are included in *Music for the Piano* by James Friskin and Irwin Freundlich. The authors argue that Rameau's treatment of the keyboard emphasizes sonority based on inclusion of arpeggio figures, alternating hands, and the use of a wider range of the keyboard.³² Therefore, Rameau's pieces are more "pianistic," quite different from the style of Couperin.³³ Maurice Hinson, too, in his *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire* claims that Rameau's keyboard music is better suited for the piano than that of Couperin because Rameau's pieces are written with a more sustained quality.³⁴

As mentioned earlier, James Anthony also acknowledges Rameau's significance as a keyboard composer. In his discussion of French keyboard music in *French Baroque Music from Beaujoyeux to Rameau*, Anthony claims that the era's musical high point was reached by the works of Couperin and Rameau.³⁵ Anthony further points out that it was only Rameau and Nicolas Siret, Couperin's pupil, who maintained their originality at the height of Couperin's musical career.³⁶ Edwin Ripin et al., as well as John Gillespie and Stewart Gordon, agree and list Rameau as one of the significant figures of the French keyboard music.³⁷ Ripin et al. point out

³¹ Willis Apel, *Masters of the Keyboard: A Brief Survey of Pianoforte Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947), 3, 164.

³² James Friskin and Irwin Freundlich, *Music for the Piano: A Handbook of Concert and Teaching Material from 1580 to 1952* (New York: Dover Publications, 1973), 26.

³³ James Friskin and Irwin Freundlich, *Music for the Piano*, 26.

³⁴ Maurice Hinson, *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire*, 3rd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 628.

³⁵ Anthony, *French Baroque Music*, 308.

³⁶ Anthony, *French Baroque Music*, 317.

³⁷ Edwin M. Ripin, et al., *Early Keyboard Instruments* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989), 215-217; John Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music: An Historical Survey of Music for Harpsichord and Piano* (1965; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1972), 96; Stewart Gordon, *A History of Keyboard Literature: Music for the Piano and Its Forerunners* (Belmont, CA: Thomson Learning, 1996), 72.

Rameau's adventurous use of the keyboard as well as harmony.³⁸ Gillespie also believes that many of Rameau's pieces are effective on the piano because of his use of the keyboard as a sustaining instrument.³⁹ Gordon describes Rameau's sonorous textures as foreshadowing writing associated with the piano.⁴⁰

The movement from the A-minor suite that is most favored by pianists appears to be the Gavotte with six variations. While researching the works of Rameau, I encountered various scores of this movement sold separately for solo piano. I have also discovered recordings on Naxos Music Library in which pianists chose to include the Gavotte, sometimes along with a few other movements from the A-minor suite in their programs. Featuring thicker sonorities and a wider range of the keyboard, the "pianistic" nature of the movement seems to appeal more to pianists than the rest of the suite. Based on my observation of the Naxos recordings, a handful of pianists decided to approach the Gavotte in highly Romantic manner, or take liberties with their unique and original ornaments.

French Keyboard Music

French music during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was heavily influenced by the French court under the reigns of Louis XIV, XV, and XVI. A number of cultural means including music were utilized to glorify the court.⁴¹ Lully's ballets, which combined the elements of music, dance, and drama, served this purpose well.⁴² Alongside the grand, larger-than-life

³⁸ Ripin, et al., *Early Keyboard Instruments*, 217.

³⁹ Gillespie, *Five Centuries*, 96.

⁴⁰ Gordon, *History of Keyboard Literature*, 72.

⁴¹ Ann Bond, *A Guide to the Harpsichord* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1997), 144.

⁴² Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 144.

style, the intimate and delicate style that permeated keyboard music also developed during this period. This more personal style appeared as early as the seventeenth century.⁴³

Baroque keyboard music in France was the work of three generations of composers. The rise of keyboard music was led by composers including Louis Couperin, Jacques Champion de Chambonnières, Henri d'Anglebert, and numerous others. Rameau belongs to the second generation of keyboard composers. It was this generation that reached the height of the French keyboard style. The works in the second generation feature elements of both traditional and new techniques. Rameau's contemporaries are, among others, François Couperin and Louis-Claude Daquin. The last generation, represented chiefly by Armand-Louis Couperin, Jacques Duphly, and Claude-Bénigne Balbastre, continued to work with the great tradition left by the previous generation. Virtuoso writing frequently can be found in the works of these composers.⁴⁴ The last generation also faced the strong wave of the new Classical style, which eventually brought a closure to the great keyboard style of the French Baroque around the time of the French Revolution.⁴⁵

French keyboard music had its origin in lute music.⁴⁶ The influence of a lute-music tradition is apparent, for instance, in the use of ornaments and their symbols as well as texture in the keyboard music. Even in the works of Rameau and François Couperin, many years after the rise of keyboard music, a trace of the lute-music tradition can still be found. Rameau's unmeasured prelude found in his first set of keyboard suites is only one of many examples. Notated with stylized slurs and often with note heads without stems, unmeasured preludes are improvisatory in nature and were once used to warm up, assess the tuning, and establish the key

⁴³ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 144-145.

⁴⁴ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 146.

⁴⁵ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 157.

⁴⁶ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 145; Max Seiffert, *Geschichte der Klaviermusik* (Leipzig: Breikopf & Härtel, 1899), 155-156 quoted in Gillespie, *Five Centuries*, 81-82.

in which the performer would play.⁴⁷ Similar to Rameau's unmeasured prelude, they may conclude with a measured and metered passage in a contrasting character. *Style brisé* is another feature that the harpsichord composers inherited from the lutenists.⁴⁸ *Style brisé*, often referred to as the broken style, creates a kind of polyphonic sound in which notes in one hand are frequently played one at a time. It is characteristic of this style that dissonances are created by holding over selected notes into the next harmony.

Dance music holds an important position in French keyboard music.⁴⁹ Continuing the tradition of lute music, dance music was further developed by keyboard composers. As the dances were grouped together into a suite according to a key, four dances – *allemande*, *courante*, *sarabande*, and *gigue* – became the standard core movements for the keyboard suite. This standardization is attributed to Johann Jakob Froberger.⁵⁰ Early keyboard suites included some or all core dances as well as a few additional movements. The scope of the keyboard suite expanded over time. By the time of Rameau, we encounter suites that are larger and feature more variety in the selection of movements such as character pieces.

It is important to keep in mind that the stylization of dances occurred over time. As the primary purpose of dance music shifted to merely listening, unique features of the dances became exaggerated while dance music became more complex and substantial. The dances that were traditionally performed by professional dancers such as the *sarabande* and *courante* were more heavily affected by this stylization than social dances such as the *minuet* and *gavotte*.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 155.

⁴⁸ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 154.

⁴⁹ Gillespie, *Five Centuries*, 83.

⁵⁰ Howard Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation from the 14th to the 19th Century: An Introduction* (1975; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 30.

⁵¹ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 148.

Ann Bond describes the core dances to add more codification to their meaning and purpose.⁵² The *allemande*, a dance in 2 or 4, developed from the relatively simple texture of the first generation of composers to more elaborate, contrapuntal writing in the eighteenth century. The more mature *allemandes* often feature continuous sixteenth notes throughout the texture. The *courante* has its well-known Italian counterpart, *corrente*, which is very different in nature. Whereas the Italian *corrente* is written in a simple texture with a melody, the French *courante* is full of rhythmic ambiguities. Six beats per measure are grouped differently, sometimes even between hands. Such groupings may be indicated through the beaming of notes by the composer.

The *sarabande* originated as a quick dance, which settled into a slow movement in 3 after the music no longer served actual dancing. Despite this stylization, dance movements of the *sarabande* still had an effect upon the music as the second beat tends to be emphasized with longer notes. The *sarabande* is an expressive and noble dance. Composers often chose to use rich, colorful harmony and used a plethora of embellishments and hemiolas. An example of colorful harmony is borrowing chords from the parallel minor. In some early suites by Chambonnières and others, the *sarabande* is the movement that ended a suite rather than the more usual *gigue*.

The origin of the *gigue* may be traced back to the virginalist *jig*. The *gigue* is a movement in a compound meter. However, the light characteristic sound typically associated with the *gigue* is not a determining factor of the dance; some *gigues* are written in a thick texture. Additionally, a significant number of Baroque *gigues* are imitative. In a binary design, a theme subject is often inverted in the second half, if not replaced with a new theme. In addition to the dances above, commonly featured dances are the *gavotte*, *bourrée*, *minuet*, *loure*, and *rigaudon*. Any of the dances can be accompanied by its doubles or variations.

⁵² Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 148-151.

Some other types of movements outside of dance music but sometimes included in the French keyboard suite are *tombeau*, *musette*, *tambourin*, *rondeau*, and character pieces. The *tombeau* is a composition intended as a tribute to a deceased person, typically written by a student for his or her teacher.⁵³ As the title indicates, the *musette* imitates the sound of the instrument by featuring its characteristic drone. The *tambourin* is joyous, evoking the drumming sound of the Breton folk music with a repeated left-hand figure.⁵⁴ Character pieces were a popular genre.⁵⁵ These movements may evoke a certain mood or portray an individual. Some titles are even enigmatic as in François Couperin's "Les baricades mystérieuses." Some other movements may bear a programmatic title, however, they may simply be a dance disguised as a character piece. The *rondeau* is composed of a refrain and several couplets in contrasting characters in which the refrain is inserted between each couplet.

There are other factors that contribute to the distinctness of French keyboard music. For example, French composers were not greatly concerned with polyphonic writing.⁵⁶ Composers surely wrote in contrapuntal textures, however, music that requires formal contrapuntal procedures such as a fugue was rarely composed.⁵⁷ French music is full of simple ornaments, rather than virtuosic ornate runs. Its melodic material tends to be short and symmetrical, featuring the prevalence of stepwise motion and a limited amount of chromaticism. Motivic unity was not a focus of French writing, and French pieces are typically small-scale and concise, governed by a single mood.⁵⁸

⁵³ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 151.

⁵⁴ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 154.

⁵⁵ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 145.

⁵⁶ Timothy Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music: Sources and Applications*, ed. Joel Lester (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2001), 4.

⁵⁷ Gordon, *History of Keyboard Literature*, 70.

⁵⁸ Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music*, 3-4.

The tonal language of French keyboard music is highly expressive, which Bond argues deserves more attention. She points out that this expressiveness of harmony came about in the second half of the seventeenth century and lists three distinctive features regarding harmony.⁵⁹ First, tension created between major and minor modes was often used. The second is the use of harmony derived from a melodic minor scale. It is evident in the frequently encountered major subdominant chord in a minor mode. The last feature is suspended dissonances.

French composers also used a technique, called *pièce croisée*, which should not be confused with hand crossing used in Rameau's "Les trois Mains" as well as numerous sonatas of Scarlatti. *Pièce croisée* uses the same range of two uncoupled eight-foot registers of a single harpsichord.⁶⁰ Because the tone colors of the two eight-foot registers are slightly different, both hands playing separate manuals create an interesting auditory sensation. Couperin explains that *pièce croisée* can still be played on a single manual keyboard with some adjustments, although the unique effect of the technique is lost in the process.⁶¹

French composers had not yet adopted modern time signatures during this period. The time signatures we encounter in their music simply include a single digit, indicating the number of beats per measure. In addition, a C meter appears in French music typically indicating a slow tempo.⁶² As with the C meter, French time signatures appear to suggest both tempo and character. For example, the 3 meter, a common notation used for the *courante* and *sarabande*, was less brisk than its Italian counterpart, 3/4.⁶³

⁵⁹ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 146.

⁶⁰ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 154; Frederick Hammond, "Domenico Scarlatti," 169.

⁶¹ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 154.

⁶² Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music*, 70.

⁶³ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 148.

Rameau and his French contemporaries, in addition to their nationalistic traits, incorporated some characteristics of the Italian style.⁶⁴ The Italian expression is more outward than that of the French. It displays more virtuosity, complexity, sequential writing, and longer and angular melodic lines.⁶⁵ We can observe this Italian trait in the A-minor suite, which will be discussed in chapter three.

In the next chapter, I will discuss differences between piano and harpsichord. Because they are constructed differently, methods of playing them are also different. Topics such as sound and timbre, means of expression, and temperament are discussed. Information concerning performance practices of the time of Rameau are also included in chapter two. It is essential that performers are knowledgeable about such practices in order to play works from this period successfully. Issues including ornaments, *rubato* and, *notes inégales* are discussed in chapter two.

⁶⁴ Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music*, 5.

⁶⁵ Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music*, 4-5.

CHAPTER TWO

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HARPSICHORD AND PIANO; PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

Although they share a similar keyboard, the piano and the harpsichord are fundamentally different instruments. Because the modern piano is already familiar to pianists, I will refer to the grand piano only for a comparison in order to provide a clear description of the harpsichord. Since Bartolomeo Cristofori's first piano in 1709, the instrument continued to evolve with improvements. Development of the modern piano took place during the mid-nineteenth century.⁶⁶ On the other hand, the earliest mention of the harpsichord dates back to 1397 with the invention of the instrument.⁶⁷ The harpsichord remained in use until the end of the eighteenth century, however, it almost became completely obsolete circa 1810. The revival of the harpsichord dates from the end of the nineteenth century.⁶⁸

A Comparison of Basic Constructions of Harpsichord and Piano

One of the pronounced differences between the two instruments is the frame. While the piano has an iron frame enclosed in a wooden case, the frame of the harpsichord is wooden and much lighter. The tension on the piano strings is much greater than that on the harpsichord strings; the materials of the piano frame allows it to produce much louder and more powerful sounds. Seven octaves, covered by eighty-eight keys, are standard for the piano. The range of the

⁶⁶ John Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music: An Historical Survey of Music for Harpsichord and Piano* (1965; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1972), 13.

⁶⁷ Edwin M. Ripin, et al., *Early Keyboard Instruments* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989), 1.

⁶⁸ Ripin, et al., *Early Keyboard Instruments*, 1.

harpsichord, however, is generally narrower than that of the piano and varies among instruments. A five-octave range may be common. In the early eighteenth century, the standard French harpsichord had a range from F1 to E6, but a range starting from G1 also was common.⁶⁹ Unlike the piano, a harpsichord may be built with more than one manual, or keyboard. A varied number of strings are struck by each key on the piano while a single string is employed for one key throughout a harpsichord manual. The scaling of strings reflects on the asymmetrical shapes of both instruments: the lower the pitch, the longer and thicker the strings become. The piano is equipped with pedals: sustain, sostenuto, and *una corda*. When the sustain pedal is engaged, the dampers are lifted off the strings, allowing them to vibrate freely. The sostenuto pedal isolates and sustains a few notes or chords that are initially struck, leaving other keys unaffected. The *una corda* pedal shifts the hammers to the right, resulting in a less direct strike by the hammer onto the string(s). The effect is a softer, more muffled sound. Pedals for the harpsichord, if any are included, do not include the sustain pedal. The keys on the harpsichord are typically slightly shorter and narrower than those on the piano. The harpsichord may have reverse colored keys, and its frame can be quite ornate with intricate paintings and decorations.

Another significant difference between the modern piano and the harpsichord is the method of producing sound for each. The piano sound is produced when a key is depressed, which mobilizes a hammer to strikes strings through the double-escapement action. The sound can last as long as one lets the vibrations continue by holding down the key and preventing the dampers from engaging. In contrast, harpsichord strings are plucked. When a key is depressed, a jack, a small wooden strip on the other end of the key, is raised. A plectrum is attached to one side of the jack and plucks a string when the jack is raised. This distinctive plucked sound then travels through the bridge and the soundboard, which amplify it considerably. The quality of the

⁶⁹ Ripin, et al., *Early Keyboard Instruments*, 73.

soundboard is crucial to the sound of the harpsichord, and its thickness varies across the soundboard.⁷⁰ The quality of the soundboard is determined by its material as well as a technique called thinning.⁷¹ The sound lasts until the depressed key is released or the vibrations naturally fade away completely. However, the initial decay of the sound is much greater compared to the piano sound. Similar to when the piano key is released, a piece of felt is used in order to stop the vibrations when one releases the harpsichord key. On the harpsichord, this piece of felt is placed at the top of the jack. It is lowered as the key returns to its resting position. On return, the mechanism of the jack allows the plectrum to avoid hitting the string again.

Registration is an important aspect of harpsichord playing. In addition to one set of eight-foot strings, or strings for non-transposed pitches, the harpsichord may be equipped with another set of eight-foot strings or four-foot strings (strings sounding an octave higher), or both. By engaging different sets of strings, or changing registration, the harpsichord is capable of producing varied colors of sound. For the majority of the eighteenth century, it became standard that the French harpsichord was built with the lower manual controlling eight-foot and four-foot strings, the upper manual tying to the second set of eight-foot strings and the coupler.⁷² The mechanism couples manuals so that a single manual plays multiple manuals simultaneously. Jacks used for a set of strings are placed in a row, or a register. Depending on the instrument, the registers can be engaged through different means such as a knob that moves from side to side. When engaged, a register moves in position so that its jacks align with the strings and pluck the proper set of strings when the keys are depressed.

When a harpsichord has two sets of eight-foot strings, each set has a different position at which the strings are plucked. For this reason, the sounds produced by these sets of strings bear

⁷⁰ Ann Bond, *A Guide to the Harpsichord* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1997), 19.

⁷¹ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 19.

⁷² Ripin, et al., *Early Keyboard Instruments*, 74.

different qualities. On a double-manual harpsichord, each manual plays one set of eight-foot strings. For the purpose of engaging both sets, the manuals need to be coupled. This mechanism allows the upper manual to be played with an eight-foot register while the lower manual plays both sets of eight-foot strings. Again, a method of coupling manuals varies among harpsichords. One way is to push the entire upper manual forward. When the keys on the lower manual are played, the corresponding keys on the upper manual also descend. Playing the coupled manuals requires more force than playing uncoupled manuals because of the fact that the two manuals are aligned. The four-foot register, which is typically not used alone, provides more variety to the harpsichord sound when added to one or two eight-foot registers.⁷³ On a double-manual harpsichord, the lower manual is responsible for the four-foot strings. For the fullest, loudest sound, all three registers (two eight-foot and one four-foot registers) can be used. When an increased interest in expressing dynamic changes arose, additional mechanisms were devised for French harpsichords starting in the late 1750s to produce a crescendo effect. It became possible to change registers with the devices operated by the foot or knee without releasing the performer's hands from the keyboard.⁷⁴

Another way to change the tone color on the harpsichord is to use a buff stop, if the instrument is provided with one. The stop is comprised of a small pad made of felt or other materials, which is placed just next to every string without touching it. In the first half of the eighteenth century, this device was rare on French harpsichords.⁷⁵ When the stop is in use, all of the pads shift to press against the strings and produce a distinctive sound, which may resemble that of the lute or harp.

⁷³ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 25.

⁷⁴ Ripin, et al., *Early Keyboard Instruments*, 76.

⁷⁵ Ripin, et al., *Early Keyboard Instruments*, 76.

While the harpsichord that was discussed earlier was considered traditional and widely used, a variety of other features came into practice. Particularly during the early-music revival movement, these features were added in attempts to modernize the harpsichord. During the revival, research and practices were not always authentic. Frederick Neumann criticizes a notable figure in this movement, Arnold Dolmetsch, that “his enterprise was noble but his research was flawed.”⁷⁶ A damper pedal and a metal frame are only a few examples of such features.⁷⁷

Sound and Timbre

The construction of the instrument, the touch required by the player, and the resulting sound qualities are different between the harpsichord and the piano. Naturally, their playing techniques and literature differ as well. The piano sound can be described as being more round, heavier, and thicker than that of the harpsichord. In contrast, the harpsichord sound is often more articulated, pronounced, and transparent. As mentioned in the previous section, because of the plucking mechanism, the harpsichord sound is intense at first but decays quickly even though the sound lingers for some time, a lot longer than commonly believed.

The two distinct timbres of the piano and the harpsichord call for different types of composition. Regarding the nature of music written for the two instruments, Leonhardt explains that “most pieces of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries seem to want to speak instead of sing...whereas in the nineteenth century one thinks primarily about singing in long, sustained

⁷⁶ Frederick Neumann, “Some Controversial Aspects of the Authenticity School,” in *New Essays on Performance Practice* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 19.

⁷⁷ Ripin, et al., *Early Keyboard Instruments*, 105.

phrases.”⁷⁸ There are subtle inflections of “speech” that the harpsichord is well capable of expressing. On the contrary, the piano is more suitable for producing continuous sustained sound, and its music centers more around the “singing-like” quality. Because of these differences between the instruments, using harpsichord techniques on the piano without any adjustments is often unsuccessful. “The piano only sounds worse if you try to imitate the harpsichord. The piano has its own ideals and capacities; you can’t mix the two instruments.”⁷⁹

Means of Expression

The primary ways of creating expressions on the piano are through controlling dynamics, touch, articulation, timing, and pedals. Combinations of these factors allow varied tone colors, phrasing and voicing with seemingly infinite possibilities of sounds. Even though the expressive means available to the harpsichord are similar (touch, articulation, timing, and registration), a common view that the harpsichord cannot be as expressive as the piano is simply a misconception. I have also encountered an idea that, because the harpsichord strings are plucked, the instrument is capable of staccato articulation only, which is false. The view may stem from the fact that the volume of the harpsichord sound does not change by increasing or decreasing the pressure of the hand on the key. Another contribution to this view may be that a “straighter” school of Baroque playing was once prominent.⁸⁰

Touch affects the quality of sound on both the piano and the harpsichord. On the harpsichord, playing with relaxed hands results in a singing, resonant sound as opposed to a hard

⁷⁸ Bernard D. Sherman, “One Should Not Make a Rule: Gustav Leonhardt on Baroque Keyboard Playing,” in *Inside Early Music: Conversations with Performers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 196.

⁷⁹ Sherman, “Gustav Leonhardt,” 196.

⁸⁰ Sherman, “Gustav Leonhardt,” 195.

sound produced by tense hands.⁸¹ Releasing of the note is perhaps more pronounced on the harpsichord than the piano. Controlling the moment of damping is equally as important as an attack in harpsichord playing.⁸² An ability to control the degree of separation or overlapping is essential in emphasizing or deemphasizing notes. The note can dampen before the plucking of the next note, creating a slight space in between. The damping and the plucking can happen simultaneously to create a legato effect. Or, the damping of the first note can happen after the plucking of the following note to create a *legatissimo* or overlegato effect. When a note is plucked while the previous note is still sounding, the pronounced initial pluck is concealed, thus the note sounds deemphasized.⁸³ This overlegato is similar to the effect of the damper pedal on the piano. It is effective in highly rhythmic passages because of successive attacks and in distinguishing voices more clearly articulated.⁸⁴

Even though the volume on the harpsichord is fixed, the player can create an effect in which notes are perceived as weaker in relation to other surrounding notes. Similarly, a note is perceived to be stronger when a pluck is exposed without being obscured by previous notes, which is achieved by a slight break before an attack.⁸⁵ Using these techniques, Troeger argues that articulation and legato can affect dynamics on the harpsichord. Sustained notes build up sonority, thus sounding louder while the detached notes do not. Vibrating strings allow the sound to build up, and damping it every time that notes are played prevents the buildup. However, it increases sonority when notes are detached uniformly.⁸⁶ Similarly, the more detached and

⁸¹ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 53.

⁸² Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 54.

⁸³ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 55.

⁸⁴ Richard Troeger. *Technique and Interpretation on the Harpsichord and Clavichord* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 85.

⁸⁵ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 55.

⁸⁶ Troeger, *Technique and Interpretation*, 77.

“choppy” approach is suitable for a loud or fierce quality created by strong accents and vitality.⁸⁷

Detached notes lose sonority. However, implied intensity created by the detached sound compensates for the loss of actual volume. Therefore, a *crescendo* is possible through a gradual change from levels of legato to levels of detachment.⁸⁸ One can also convey an effect of *decrescendo*. The gradual softening of sound is achieved through successive greater articulation in a passage.⁸⁹ These delayed stresses created by the performer imply a decrease in volume.

In addition, a harpsichord player can feel the plectrum touching against the string and control the moment of the plectrum stroke. The plectrum can rest on the string, then pluck quickly, slowly, or overlapping with other notes to create subtle nuances in a tone. This kind of intimate connection a harpsichord player has with the instrument is not found in piano playing as a contact with a piano string is indirect.⁹⁰

Timing is another important mean of expression in harpsichord playing because of the instrument’s fixed volume. For example, a slight stretching of notes is useful in creating inflections in a phrase.⁹¹ A note can be played with a slight delay to create an emphasis. In a different context, a delayed note could also mean deemphasizing the note because it is not exactly on the beat. In addition, one may spread out blocked chords, which tend to sound harsh and heavy. By staggering plucks, it has a softening effect and creates warm sound.⁹² *Suspension*, shortening of the note, works much in the same way for softening attacks but for thin textures. It is important to remember that spreading textures could also create an emphasis depending on the context such as how fast one spreads textures, tessitura, and size of intervals.⁹³

⁸⁷ Troeger, *Technique and Interpretation*, 81.

⁸⁸ Troeger, *Technique and Interpretation*, 80.

⁸⁹ Troeger, *Technique and Interpretation*, 79.

⁹⁰ Sherman, “Gustav Leonhardt,” 197.

⁹¹ Troeger, *Technique and Interpretation*, 106.

⁹² Troeger, *Technique and Interpretation*, 138.

⁹³ Troeger, *Technique and Interpretation*, 133.

Articulation adds definition to a phrase. Even in a contrapuntal texture, the transparent timbre of the harpsichord allows a recurring motive or subject to be heard clearly when articulation is consistent. Where to place articulation and play *legato* largely depends on the shape of an idea.⁹⁴ One must be aware of the idea's melodic ascent and descent, and the size and direction of intervals. Unlike on the piano, voicing an important idea is often achieved through articulation without a dynamic contrast. A separation just before the entry of an idea can also emphasize the idea and further distinguish it from the rest of the texture. For phrasing, piano players sometimes “go over the barline” or the gesture and slur into the first note of the following idea. The players practice it in order to avoid sounding segmented and clunky. On the contrary, in harpsichord playing this approach may cloud the boundary of the beginning and ending of a musical idea and should be used with care. Furthermore, chords on the harpsichord cannot be voiced in the same way on the piano. An early release of notes that one wishes to play softer is a way to achieve voicing on the harpsichord.⁹⁵ Depending on how notes are released results in different effects. This approach is also useful in minimizing the sound of quills returning especially in quiet passages.⁹⁶

Temperament

The harpsichord is often tuned to one of the well-tempered systems today unless the repertoire dates from around 1650 and earlier.⁹⁷ The piano today, on the other hand, is commonly tuned in equal temperament. Although temperament is a complex topic that cannot be fully

⁹⁴ Troeger, *Technique and Interpretation*, 75.

⁹⁵ Troeger, *Technique and Interpretation*, 86.

⁹⁶ Troeger, *Technique and Interpretation*, 87

⁹⁷ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 227.

discussed here, I believe it is beneficial for pianists to become familiar with the basics. Ann Bond concisely summarizes the topic as follows.⁹⁸ The pitch is now standardized as $A = 440$ vibrations per second. French diapason pitch, $A = 392$, is one of the examples of historical standards that are significantly lower than the pitch today.

In order to tune a keyboard instrument, the tuner must set the octave so that all octaves have the frequency ratio of 2:1. Other naturally occurring intervals from the harmonic series are also essential to temperament.⁹⁹ For example, the frequency ratios of the fifth, fourth, and major third are 3:2, 4:3, and 5:4 respectively. When an interval is not quite pure, fluctuations in the volume occur. This phenomenon is known as “beats” and becomes more disturbing as the rate of beats increases. Tuning in pure intervals produces a clear, pleasant sound. However, it is impossible to do so within the fixed octave. One way to demonstrate the issue is to divide the octave into three major thirds. By using the pure thirds, a frequency ratio of 125:64 is derived by adding the ratio of 5:4 thrice. The resulting ratio is smaller than what is required of the octave, 2:1.

Meantone temperament is a system often used for seventeenth-century music.¹⁰⁰ In this system, a tone is defined as half the size of a pure major third. Of the twelve thirds within the octave, eight are pure thirds. In order to compensate for the pure thirds, the remaining four thirds remain too large in comparison. The size of the fifths is slightly smaller than pure except for one known as the “wolf,” which is much larger than the pure fifth and is rendered unusable. In practice, the meantone temperament works well for simple keys with fewer flats or sharps as the black keys are tuned to B-flat, E-flat, F-sharp, C-sharp, and G-sharp, and the keys cannot be used as their enharmonics. In addition, half steps in this system are further distinguished as half and

⁹⁸ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 222-227.

⁹⁹ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 223-224.

¹⁰⁰ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 224-225.

chromatic, which are different in size. Because the diatonic half steps are larger than the chromatic ones, the leading tone often sounds considerably flat to today's listeners. Later in the eighteenth century, attempts were made in order to minimize the effect of the wolf fifth.

Meanwhile, well-tempered systems were devised since the late seventeenth century, allowing all keys to be functional.¹⁰¹ This idea became possible when the wolf fifth was no longer fixed in position. Placing of the imperfection of the fifths was the key to such temperament. A number of systems were suggested by Werckmeister and Kirnberger.

Differences in sound quality and character associated with keys originate in these unequal temperaments.¹⁰² The further into the circle of fifths, the more intense a character of a key becomes. No such differences exist in the equal temperament. In this system, no interval is pure except the octave: fifths are narrower than pure, thirds are wider than pure, and half steps are equidistant from each other. Equal temperament suits chromatic music and is used for the piano today. However, the system is not ideal for the harpsichord. The sympathetic resonance of surrounding strings contributes to the rich harmonics of the harpsichord sound, and it is the pure intervals that bring about the sympathetic resonance.

Harpsichordists tune their instrument differently according to their program. Kenneth Gilbert uses Rousseau's system for works of Couperin and Rameau while he uses Werckmeister III for Bach.¹⁰³ Rather than adopting a historical system, Gustav Leonhardt tunes with his own unequal temperament. Leonhardt adjusts his tuning according to the keys and enharmonics in the program with a special attention to the major third. He claims the purer the major third, the better it is for the music.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 226.

¹⁰² Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 226-227.

¹⁰³ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 227.

¹⁰⁴ Sherman, "Gustav Leonhardt," 119-200.

Basic knowledge of temperament helps us better appreciate Rameau's remarks on the topic. In the preface to the *Book of 1726/27*, Rameau discusses the importance of the quarter tone and how musicians of his time appreciate the sound once again as they did in ancient times. The difference between the diatonic half step and the chromatic half step as Rameau explains comes from the quarter tone. For example, B and C form a diatonic half step while B and B-sharp form a chromatic one. In order to better perceive the quarter tone, Rameau encourages the reader to consider the pleasant sound of A and C in the key of A, and a harsh dissonant between A and B-sharp in the key of C-sharp.¹⁰⁵ These pairs of notes are indeed played with the very same keys, yet produce different effects. It is effective only when the musician perceives such intervals in the context of tonality, rather than as isolated single events. The quarter tone is also a key to what Rameau calls the enharmonic style.¹⁰⁶ In the *Book of 1726/27*, Rameau included two movements that feature the effect of the quarter tone: "La Triomphante" from the suite in A-minor, and "Enharmonique" from the suite in G-major. Rameau explains that the material in m. 12 of the "Enharmonique" is intentionally placed based on logic even though its beauty may not be accepted right away due to unfamiliarity. The passage in question from "La Triomphante" will be discussed further in detail in chapter three.

Much has been lost in using the equal temperament for early music. While I do not believe using Rameau's tuning is a requirement in a piano performance of his music, I think that the performer should at least be exposed to the idea and sound of unequal temperaments. When the opportunity arises, it is worthwhile for pianists to become familiar with temperaments favored by Rameau and with those commonly used during the time of the composer.

¹⁰⁵ Jean-Philippe Rameau, "Remarks on the Pieces in this Book and on the Different Styles of Music," in *The Books of 1726/27 and 1741*, vol. 2 of *New Edition of the Complete Keyboard Works*, ed. Siegbert Rampe, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2004), 4.

¹⁰⁶ Rameau, "Remarks on the Pieces," 4.

Performance Practice

Baroque composers left very few performance indications in the score. French composers in particular used inconsistent symbols, especially to indicate ornaments. It is always a challenge to decipher how to execute them appropriately. This is why the flexible nature of Baroque ornamentation is one of the more controversial topics of classical music. Even though the ways to execute ornaments are summarized in an ornament table given by composers and scholars, the details always vary depending on the context. Only the basic forms of ornaments are indicated in such tables. Therefore, players cannot expect definite rules to follow when playing Baroque music. In addition, performers are encouraged to add their own ornaments in French Baroque music. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, adding embellishments not given by the composer was a widely-accepted practice and is one of the significant characteristics of performing early music.¹⁰⁷

When pianists study Baroque keyboard literature, they often refer to J. S. Bach's table of ornaments. Bach studied works of different nationalities and developed his own international style. Using his table of ornaments, however, is only applicable to Bach's works and those of composers of similar backgrounds and styles. Rameau and other French composers had their own set of ornament symbols that derived from the French lute-music tradition. Performers should not blindly apply one set of ornaments to any piece of music.

I have encountered editions of Rameau's keyboard works with modern ornament symbols. Perhaps some pianists find the use of such symbols familiar and convenient. I believe that this approach takes away the subtleties of the composer's ornaments and allows performers to

¹⁰⁷ Timothy Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music: Sources and Applications*, ed. Joel Lester (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2001), 19.

become heavily dependent on the editor's interpretation. I recommend that performers use an Urtext edition, and they should first familiarize themselves with the French tradition before attempting to interpret Rameau's works. In general, ornaments were carefully notated by composers of the early French keyboard music. Many composers followed the example set by Jacques Champion de Chambonnières in 1670 and provided ornament tables with their compositions.¹⁰⁸ However, their terms and symbols were often different one to another.

For the reasons stated above, it is invaluable to examine Rameau's own ornament table. Rameau provides one in the *Book of 1724*.¹⁰⁹ His writing refers players to the ornament table for proper executions.¹¹⁰ Clearly, Rameau wished his music to be performed in a certain manner, and he made efforts to communicate his ideas to the audience.

In his table of ornaments, Rameau introduces twelve types (see figure 1). A *cadence* is a trill, alternations of the main note and its upper neighbor, which other composers call a *tremblement*. The term *cadence* can mean "even," possibly suggesting the use of notes of equal length. Rameau's model includes eight sixteenth notes for an entire duration of a half note starting on the upper-neighbor tone. A variation of the *cadence* is a *cadence appuyée*. As the name suggests, *appuyée*, meaning pressed, it is played with the same alterations of two notes but with a longer starting note. The symbol of a *cadence* combined with a sideways hook indicates a *double cadence*. A turn is added at the end of the *cadence* with the lower-neighbor tone and back to the main note. A *doublé*, indicated with a sideways letter S is a turn starting on the upper-neighbor tone.

¹⁰⁸ Howard Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation from the 14th to the 19th Century: An Introduction* (1975; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 136-137.

¹⁰⁹ Jean-Philippe Rameau, *The Books of 1705/06 and 1724*, vol. 1 of *New Edition of the Complete Keyboard Works*, ed. Siegbert Rampe, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2004), 16.

¹¹⁰ Rameau, "Remarks on the Pieces," 3.

Figure 1. Rameau's Ornament Table

NOMS et figures des agrements	NOMS et expressions des agrements	Liaison	Expression
Cadence	Cadence	Une liaison qui embrasse deux notes différentes, comme - - -	
Cadence appuyée	Cadence appuyée	marque qu'il ne faut lever le doigt de dessus la première qu'après avoir touché la seconde.	
Double Cadence	Double Cadence	La note liée à celle qui porte une Cadence ou un Pincé, sert de commencement à chacun de ces agrements	
Double	Double	Exemple	Expression
Pincé	Pincé	Une liaison qui embrasse plusieurs notes, marque qu'il faut les tenir toutes d'un bout de la liaison à l'autre à mesure qu'on les touche.	
Port de voix	Port de voix	Exemple	Expression
Coulez	Coulez	I.e. pince 1 doit se trouver dans le milieu de cette batterie.	
Pincé et port de voix	Pincé et port de voix	Première Leçon	
Son Coupé	Son Coupé	Main droite	
Suspension	Suspension	Ceci se répète souvent sans discontinuer, et avec égalité de mouvement.	
Arpegement simple	Arpegement simple	Main gauche	
Arpegement figure	Arpegement figure		

Source: Jean-Philippe Rameau, *The Books of 1705/06 and 1724*, vol. 1 of *New Edition of the Complete Keyboard Works*, ed. Siegbert Rampe, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2004), 16.

A hook on the right side of the note indicates a *pincé*. Like the *cadence*, the *pincé* is alternations of two adjacent notes. The term, *pincé* literally means to pinch or nip. The difference between these ornaments is that the starting note on which the *pincé* begins is the main note while the *cadence* begins on the upper-neighbor tone. The *pincé* also trills below, not above, the main note. *Port de voix* and *coulez* are indicated in the same manner with a hook on the left side of the main note. The pattern of *port de voix* is formed when the main note is preceded by a note below. The ornament is a lower-neighbor tone inserted just before the main note. Similarly, the *coulez*, meaning to flow, consists of the ornamented main note, which is preceded by a note higher than the main note. The upper-neighbor tone is added as an ornament before the main note. For both the *port de voix* and *coulez*, the added note is shown to be half the length of the main note in Rameau's models. *Pincé et port de voix* is indicated with hooks on the both sides of the main note. As the name suggests, the ornament begins on the lower-neighbor tone followed by alternations of the neighbor tone and main note. The starting and ending notes of this pattern are played slightly longer than the rest.

Son coupé is the equivalent of today's staccato. The word *coupé* means to cut or chop. Indicated with a vertical dash above the note, the *son coupé* shortens the note. Rameau's model shows the note being shortened by half. *Suspension*, marked with a caret above the note, also shortens the note. Unlike the *son coupé*, the note with the *suspension* is played with a slight delay. When a chord is marked with a slash, the chord is arpeggiated. Rameau's term for this broken chord is *arpegement simple*. When the slash is placed above the chord, it is played as a descending arpeggio while the slash below the chord indicates an ascending arpeggio. A variation of this broken chord is *arpegement figure*. This ornament is indicated with a slash and vertical bracket. The chord is played with an added note or the "figure" as shown in the table. An

example of *arpeggement simple* is provided by Rameau. When both hands play a chord, which is to be arpeggiated in a descending order, the top voice in each hand is played on the beat followed by the right-hand arpeggio then by the remaining notes in the left hand. The A-minor suite incorporates most of the ornaments provided by Rameau.

In addition to the list of ornaments, Rameau provides instructions on how to execute several figures, which are notated in specific manners (see figure 1).¹¹¹ He explains the notation of a tie at the beginning. When playing a figure under a slur, Rameau instructs to lift a finger before playing the next figure. When a note with the *cadence* is slurred together with its upper or lower neighbor, the *cadence* begins on the main note on the beat. It appears that there is no need to delay the start of the *cadence* as if the upper-neighbor tone is tied to the beginning of the *cadence*. The next figure consists of a broken chord tied to a block chord of the same notes. This notation requires all members of the broken chord to be held and tied to the block chord. Following the special notation of figures, Rameau provides fingering for an arpeggiated figure: an upward octave leap followed by an ascending and descending thirds. This figure in the left hand is to be played 5, 1, 2, 1. Finally, Rameau instructs the performer to play notes to align vertically when both hands have notes of equal length in unison or in a parallel motion.

Neumann describes that many French composers used ornaments that begin on the beat.¹¹² In addition to the ornaments starting on the beat, he uses Couperin's ornaments among others to prove that the pre-beat design was in use. Scholars are in agreement based on Couperin's scores that the *coulez* in particular can be played either before or on the beat.¹¹³ It is reasonable to apply the interpretation of Couperin's ornaments to the music of Rameau because

¹¹¹ Jean-Philippe Rameau, *1705/06 and 1724*, 16.

¹¹² Frederick Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1993), 306-307.

¹¹³ Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music*, 26-27.

of their stylistic similarities. Furthermore, the performer may place ornaments before the beat when the ornaments create undesirable voice leading or harmony such as parallel fifths if they were played on the beat.¹¹⁴

In the A-minor suite, there is a pattern that is found in François Couperin's ornaments but that is not explained by Rameau. This pattern involves notes that are a third apart and the latter is embellished with the *coulez*. In such instances, the *coulez* is played before the beat.¹¹⁵ This issue will be discussed in details in chapter three concerning performance suggestions.

Neumann also describes the widespread use of the *cadence* and its variations starting on the upper neighbor for keyboard music.¹¹⁶ One of the exceptions to this statement is the aforementioned *cadence* under a slur. In addition, when notes are moving quickly, the *cadence* may begin on the main note.¹¹⁷ It is especially applicable when the main note is preceded by its upper neighbor; playing the same note twice and fitting in all parts of the *cadence* is not a practical solution even though the main-note *cadence* is not discussed by the composer.

Whether one takes a repeat is another debatable topic in performing early music. As Schultz points out, the musical scenes today and in the eighteenth century are vastly different. Whereas today's musical performances oftentimes take place in concerts, music in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was provided for a variety of social occasions. Therefore, it is likely that the musicians in the early days took repeats as the situation required.¹¹⁸ Performers today should decide when to take repeats based on the composer's intentions but also remember the possibility that the idea of repeats was once flexible. In the A-minor suite, most movements conform to a binary design, which typically calls for a repeat in both sections. Contrary to this

¹¹⁴ Neumann, *Performance Practices*, 307.

¹¹⁵ Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation*, 142.

¹¹⁶ Neumann, *Performance Practice*, 381-382.

¹¹⁷ Neumann, *Performance Practice*, 386.

¹¹⁸ Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music*, 36.

expectation, Rameau does not always indicate a repeat at the end of a reprise. I do not consider a lack of a repeat sign in the Sarabande and “Fanfarinette” as an error, and follow the score accordingly in my performance. More on individual movements regarding repeats will be discussed in chapter three, the performance suggestions.

Keyboardists also need to consider other aspects of performance practice that are not apparent in the score. Some are more relevant to modern pianists than others. For example, fingering in the eighteenth century was much different from what pianists learn from Czerny exercises. We know about early fingering to some extent as composers including Rameau left examples of fingering often as part of a discussion of good playing techniques. One example by Rameau is given in his ornament table as previously mentioned. Various composers left a number of fingering examples that may appear impractical for pianists today.¹¹⁹ Although harpsichord fingerings do not always transfer to piano playing, Rameau made some fingering suggestions that are still relevant to pianists. For instance, a left-handed arpeggiated pattern from his ornament table spanning a tenth that consists of an ascending octave and third followed by a descending third is given a fingering of 5, 1, 2, 1.¹²⁰ This fingering allows the left hand to remain relaxed and reach the notes quickly.

Leonhardt has a cautious view on early fingerings. He finds François Couperin’s fingerings carefully thought out and useful. Generally speaking, however, he warns against the idea of finding a musical intent of a composer from the fingerings that remain to this day.¹²¹ Although fingerings could suggest articulation, he finds a substantial amount of inconsistencies in fingerings even within a single piece. For the purpose of interpreting Rameau’s pieces on the piano, I suspect that the early fingerings alone will not serve to bring out the authentic sound.

¹¹⁹ Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation*, 69.

¹²⁰ Rameau, *1705/06 and 1724*, 16.

¹²¹ Sherman, “Gustav Leonhardt,” 199.

What performers should remember, I believe, is the reason why Rameau and others suggested such fingerings. Rameau explains a proper technique and importance of *legato* playing in his essay, “On Playing Technique on the Harpsichord.”¹²² We should not be too concerned with Rameau’s exact fingerings as long as we strive for the effect of the sound Rameau envisioned.

Dance characteristics and the general feel and attitude towards music may differ across nationalities. In Couperin’s *L’art de toucher le clavecin*, or *Of The Art of Playing the Harpsichord*, he describes the nature of French music that is played differently from how it appears on the page.

In my opinion, there are faults in our way of writing music, which correspond to the way in which we write our language. The fact is we write a thing differently from the way in which we execute it; and it is this which causes foreigners to play our music less well than we do theirs. The Italians, on the contrary, write their music in the true time-values in which they have intended them to be played. For instance, we dot several consecutive quavers in diatonic succession, and yet we write them as equal; our custom has enslaved us; and we hold fast to it.¹²³

This practice is one reason why foreigners during Couperin’s time as well as modern performers are troubled by French music. In this passage, Couperin speaks of *notes inégales* being a French practice. Therefore, music of Bach, for instance, likely would not qualify for such ornamentation.¹²⁴

Notes inégales are a rhythmic ornament. As mentioned above, it is almost exclusively a French tradition. This convention is well documented from the mid-sixteenth century and continued to be practiced until the end of the eighteenth century.¹²⁵ When applied, pairs of notes of equal length are played long-short, although the balance of “long to short” can vary in practice.

¹²² Jean-Philippe Rameau, “On Playing Technique on the Harpsichord,” in *Books of 1705/06 & 1724*, vol. 1 of *New Edition of the Complete Keyboard Works*, ed. Siegbert Rampe, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2004), 19-20.

¹²³ François Couperin, *L’art de toucher le clavecin*, ed. Anna Linde, trans. Mevanwy Roberts (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1961), 23.

¹²⁴ Neumann, *Performance Practices*, 133.

¹²⁵ Neumann, *Performance Practices*, 120.

The proportion of the long-short pattern ranges from very subtle 7:5 to 2:1.¹²⁶ These figures are likely approximation; it is doubtful that the proportions were actually measured in practice.¹²⁷ It is important to keep in mind that the effect of *notes inégales* is subtle and cannot be notated in a conventional manner.¹²⁸ For this reason, an extreme inequality that is similar to adding a dot is undesirable. The inequality is applied to a voice moving primarily in a stepwise motion.¹²⁹ *Notes inégales* are usually applied to values a quarter of the beat in duple meters and to values half of the beat for triple and compound meters.¹³⁰ For instance, eighth notes and sixteenth notes in 4/4 may be subjected to rhythmic alteration; however, the beat itself should not be altered as it disturbs the sense of pulse.¹³¹ That is, the beat can be emphasized by being lengthened but cannot be shortened. There is no universally accepted opinion on applying inequality to mixed levels of subdivisions.¹³² For example, in a piece or movement in which eighth notes receive rhythmic alteration, sixteenth notes may or may not be played with inequality. When *notes inégales* are not needed, the composer indicated that notes are to be played equal by adding dots or dashes above the notes and words such as *notes égales*, *marqué*, and *détaché*.¹³³ In addition, *notes inégales* are not used in movements that are very quick or vigorous in which “grace and charm” are not fitting.¹³⁴

Another convention that involves altering rhythm is the French overture style. Originally suggested by Arnold Dolmetsche, this style of playing is widely practiced beyond the French

¹²⁶ Neumann, *Performance Practices*, 121.

¹²⁷ Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music*, 11.

¹²⁸ Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation*, 99.

¹²⁹ Neumann, *Performance Practices*, 121.

¹³⁰ Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music*, 9.

¹³¹ Neumann, *Performance Practices*, 121.

¹³² Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music*, 10.

¹³³ Neumann, *Performance Practices*, 121.

¹³⁴ Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation*, 102.

overture even though scholars do not always agree on the credibility of the claim.¹³⁵ Especially in slow movements with a character somewhat similar to the French overture, a dotted note is exaggerated and played double dotted. In order to compensate for overdotting, the following note is played very short at the last moment possible. Other voices may be adjusted to align vertically with the shortened note.

Concerning the topic of overdotting, Ferguson and others discuss variable dots. Ferguson points out that the double dot was not in use before the mid-eighteenth century and that rhythmic notation during the early Classical period was not always accurate or consistent.¹³⁶ Therefore, the length of a dotted note may be longer than notated depending on the context. There are no rules about the placement of the double dot. In any situation, the performer must decide the length of a dotted note based on harmony, voice leading, and similar occurrences of the figure in question.¹³⁷ In the A-minor suite, no such issues with variable dots are found. Regardless of various readings of the treatises, it is unlikely that the French overture style applies to the A-minor suite.

Arriving at an appropriate tempo is a challenge especially for early music. For instance, there are no character or tempo markings indicated in the A-minor suite. Even though Schultz consulted credible sources for determining tempi, he was not always able to simply adapt the suggested figures from the sources and apply them to his selected French music.¹³⁸ Along with newly invented metronomes, French scholars in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries recorded tempi of dances.¹³⁹ These figures may or may not work for keyboard renditions of the dances because first, the tempi are taken from music meant for actual dancing and second, the

¹³⁵ Neumann, *Performance Practices*, 119.

¹³⁶ Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation*, 85-86.

¹³⁷ Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation*, 87.

¹³⁸ Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music*, 17.

¹³⁹ Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation*, 43.

beat applies to different note values.¹⁴⁰ Scholars agree that the values given by the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century treatises concerning tempi are fairly consistent.¹⁴¹ However, the scholars do not always agree on which note value represents the beat. Wrongly applying one of the values to the beat could cause a tempo to be twice as fast or slow as the intended tempo. As previously mentioned, the time signature can provide some ideas regarding tempo. The 3 meter, for example, is faster than 3/4 but slower than 3/8, which was perceived as the fastest.¹⁴² A more practical solution is to consider the texture and prevailing note values.¹⁴³ A piece calls for a slower tempo when it is written with frequent thirty-second notes, heavily ornamented, or with a fast harmonic rhythm with one chord change every quarter note. Similarly, a faster tempo is likely to be appropriate when the note values are no smaller than eighth notes, ornaments are minimal, and harmonic rhythm is slow. The character and the form of the piece are also crucial in deciding a tempo.¹⁴⁴

Phrasing and articulation are also challenging in early music because of a lack of notation or inconsistencies in marking them. While François Couperin used apostrophes most likely to indicate musical units, only a small number of markings were left by the composer in Rameau's A-minor suite. Aside from some shortened note values and slurs given by Rameau, the performer needs to recognize musical units and carry out appropriate phrasing and articulation. Because of the prevalence of dance music in the French Baroque style, one may turn to dance movements in search of authentic phrasing. Schultz points out, however, the mutual independence of dance and music as the music generally preceded the choreography.¹⁴⁵ For instance, the choreography of the

¹⁴⁰ Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation*, 43-44.

¹⁴¹ Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music*, 16.

¹⁴² Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music*, 64.

¹⁴³ Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation*, 44.

¹⁴⁴ Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation*, 45.

¹⁴⁵ Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music*, 33.

sarabande does not correlate with the typical emphasis placed on the second beat in its music.¹⁴⁶

Rather, musical gestures and phrases become discernible by analyzing the melodic shape, harmony, and rhythm. Conveying the musical structure can be achieved through controlling varying degrees of dynamics, attacks, and releases.¹⁴⁷ For example, the performer may release slightly early before starting a new phrase. The last note of a phrase may be unstressed while notes on strong beats in the middle of a phrase may be appropriately played stressed.

Ferguson argues that *rubato* is inherent in the nature of music and it was likely practiced even before the concept appeared in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century treatises.¹⁴⁸ *Rubato* can be applied to a wide range of music. One exception is a rhythmically driven style of music such as a quick dance. The appropriateness of *rubato* is determined largely by a degree of its usage. The movements in the A-minor suite are mostly dances or dance-like. Small stretches of note value will be used sparingly.

The harpsichord is smaller and more delicately made than the modern piano. It is characterized by its sound production, the plucking of strings. Because of the structural differences in the harpsichord, the instrument requires a different set of techniques to play expressively. The importance of using an ornament table provided by the composer as a guide is already mentioned. Rameau goes on to explain other musical features in his ornament table such as arpeggios and fingering. There are conventions other than ornaments such as *notes inégales*, tempo, and *rubato*, which are important aspect of performing the A-minor suite. In the next chapter, I will discuss my interpretation of the A-minor suite based on the information provided here.

¹⁴⁶ Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music*, 32.

¹⁴⁷ Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music*, 32.

¹⁴⁸ Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation*, 48-49.

CHAPTER THREE

PERFORMANCE SUGGESTIONS FOR PIANISTS

FOR RAMEAU’S A-MINOR SUITE

Several authors have reported that little is known about Rameau’s life particularly before he gained fame as an opera composer.¹⁴⁹ It was during this mostly unknown part of Rameau’s life when he composed his A-minor suite. He composed three books of keyboard suites: *Premier Livre de Pièces de Clavecin* (1706), *Pièces de Clavessin* (1724), and *Nouvelles Suites de Pièces de Clavecin* (1726/27). The A-minor suite that is the subject of this dissertation can be found in the last book, *Nouvelles Suites*, along with a suite in G minor. (This 1726/27 work should not be confused with the suite in *Premier Livre* that is also in A minor.)

The A-minor suite and other French multi-movement works of the era were not always expected to be performed in their entirety. A performer was able to select movements as appropriate to the occasion. As Bond explains, these pieces were not designed to be performed from their beginning to the end.¹⁵⁰ The movements were often grouped together into a suite based on a key rather than an underlying theme uniting the movements.¹⁵¹ For example, a selection from the A-minor suite ending with “La Triomphante” can be included in a concert in which the movement’s festive character and decisive ending would be an appropriate conclusion of a performance.

¹⁴⁹ Stewart Gordon, *A History of Keyboard Literature: Music for the Piano and its Forerunners* (Belmont, CA: Thomson Learning, 1996), 72.

¹⁵⁰ Ann Bond, *A Guide to the Harpsichord* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1997), 151.

¹⁵¹ Howard Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation from the 14th to the 19th Century: An Introduction* (1975; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 31.

The extant piano recordings of the A-minor suite exhibit a wide range of interpretation. I point to these recordings only for the purpose of comparison and reference. I do not offer criticism of the pianists' interpretative decisions.

Today the use of pedal in performing Baroque music is controversial because the period instruments did not have a sustaining pedal. Its use is supported by Howard Ferguson, however, with caution.¹⁵² I use the sustaining pedal throughout the A-minor suite for two reasons. First is to create a better *legato* and ambiance because the connected sound created with the damper pedal cannot be achieved solely by finger pedaling. The second reason is to accent targeted sonorities. Regardless of the reason for pedaling, I proceed with care as suggested by Ferguson, and make sure to maintain the transparency of the texture.

Allemande

This movement in C meter is a typical *allemande*, which has four beats to a measure and often is associated with a slow tempo. Written in two sections, it is the longest movement in the A-minor suite followed by the Gavotte and variations. Phrases vary in length, and sequences appear one after another, creating an organic flow. Each section ends with a three-measure gesture, or a “tail,” in a contrasting texture. The first section brings the tonal center to the minor dominant in E. The second half of the movement briefly gives the impression of being in a major dominant. However, it quickly moves on and tonicizes several keys, eventually returning to the A minor. The musical material from the first section returns in the second section truncated and back in the tonic. Contrapuntal and heavily ornamented, the movement conveys a serious,

¹⁵² Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation*, 161.

dignified character. Imitation is kept at a bare minimum. Mostly in three parts, the voices predominantly move in eighth and sixteenth notes with occasional dotted rhythms.

For this movement, I use a *legato* touch throughout in order to express the character. The exceptions are the second half of m. 2 in the bass, the sequence starting in m. 23, and the ends of each section. The movement of the lowest voice, similar to that of a walking bass, is unique to m. 2. There is merit in emphasizing this idea by playing the bass notes in a detached manner. One sequence from m. 23 to m. 25 stands out because of the figurative texture in only two voices, consisting of arpeggios. I play the descending right-hand arpeggios slightly detached. A contrast in articulation is necessary because of a lack of variety in the note values. Maintaining *legato* in this passage may cause it to sound sluggish and heavy. The last measures of each section will be discussed separately.

The tempo I choose is around 44 quarter-note beats per minute. The choice agrees with the time signature, typically indicating a slow tempo. It is still possible to feel the pulse, four beats per measure, at this slow tempo. It also allows the ornaments, including *note inégales*, to be played expressively without compromising their quality.

The Allemande of the A-minor suite is one in which *notes inégales* are suitable if used sparingly. As mentioned previously, this rhythmic ornament applies to pairs of notes written to be of equal lengths but to be played to create a long-short pattern. The *notes inégales* method works well on notes moving in stepwise motion. The sixteenth notes in the first half of the opening measure qualify nicely for *notes inégales* (see figure 2 and audio excerpt 1). The next appropriate gestures are found in m. 3 where the top voice mirrors the lowest voice.

In addition to *notes inégales*, the performer can shape a phrase by stretching a note value just so slightly without affecting the steady beat. It is often combined with a degree of dynamic

Figure 2. Allemande, mm. 1-4. Places to apply *notes inégales*.



accent in order to create an emphasis. I place a small emphasis on the first note in m. 2, which is different from *notes inégales* because this stretching of the note is a single event, rather than a recurring pattern. The emphasized note falls on a strong beat, which reinforces the meter of the movement. Another emphasis could be placed on the second beat of m. 7. Beat three of the same measure is the end of a phrase, tonicizing C major. Therefore, the preceding beat is a place of tension created by a dominant harmony anticipating a resolution. An emphasis on this beat can help highlight the effect of the dominant.

Changing dynamic levels allows expressions such as phrasing, voicing, and contrasts. Generally, an ascending line has a natural *crescendo* while a descending line calls for a *decrescendo*. A natural *decrescendo* at ends of phrases and cadences also takes place frequently. For example, I *decrescendo* slightly toward the end of the first phrase on the first beat of m. 3 then *crescendo* again because the entire measure features an ascending line. Occasionally,

playing just the opposite is appropriate. Due to the fact that all of the voices are descending slowly in mm. 5-6, a *decrescendo* may seem fitting. Instead, I crescendo toward the first beat of m. 6. The bass note E at the end of m. 5 supports the dominant harmony anticipating a resolution to the tonic. The following beat, however, is a deceptive resolution, which should be a highlighted musical event. In turn, the passage is played with a *decrescendo* when the repeat is taken to create a contrast. These dynamic changes alone bring a wide range of effects to the passage. Terraced dynamics also highlight and help define musical structures. A sequence starting at the end of m. 7 features a descending pattern with the second leg of the sequence entering a fourth lower.¹⁵³ I play this passage with a loud-soft pattern for creating a contrast in repeated musical material.

A contrapuntal texture is one of the features of an *allemande*. There are numerous dialogue passages between voices, which are beautifully crafted by Rameau and therefore should be treated carefully by the performer. The first occurrence of such dialogue is at the third beat of m. 4 (see figure 3 and audio excerpt 1). A gesture comprised of steps in sixteenth notes is played in the inner voice, which is answered by a much different gesture in the upper voice, dominated by leaps. The dialogue continues in the following measure. Here, a pattern of sixteenth notes in the inner voice is answered by the upper-voice gesture of the same contour. When this type of texture is played on the harpsichord, the performer may play gestures in the upper voice more expressively by slightly lingering on the notes while passing the inner voice gestures rather quickly. This technique allows the performer to differentiate between two distinct voices. On the piano, I utilize the harpsichord technique with dynamic changes.

For instance, the upper-voice gesture in m. 4 can be played with marked inflection, which is appropriate for being constructed with large leaps. I play this gesture louder than the one

¹⁵³ A leg refers to a small gesture of music within a sequence that repeats at a different pitch level.

Figure 3. Allemande, mm. 3-7. Exchanges between the two upper voices.



preceding it in the inner voice with an emphasis on the highest note, A. When the sixteenth-note gesture appears again in m. 5, the upper voice remains louder than the inner voice. However, the second gesture is played softer than the first in the upper voice because of the smaller intervals and the scalar motion toward A minor, which is found in the second gesture. The technique of playing one voice more expressively than the other also applies to ornaments. I play the inner voice ornaments with less shaping and stretching of notes.

Measure 6 exhibits the same type of texture with two upper voices interacting through a call-and-response structure. However, I refrain from using the technique above in this passage. The gestures presented in the two voices are similarly shaped, suggesting equal importance of the voices. The inner- and upper-voice gestures in the first half of m. 6 both consist of an ascending stepwise motion. The second half of the measure features gestures ending with a downward leap. Rather than treating the upper two voices differently, I consider half of m. 6 as

one unit, therefore the second half of the measure is answering the first half. As in the previous measures, I play the latter half of m. 6 softer than the first half because of the descending line formed by the long notes placed on strong beats in the top voice.

Similar passages are found in mm. 13, 32, and 34. I consider the phrase starting at m. 34 especially expressive because the phrase contains the highest pitch in the movement, C6, and wide intervals presented in the top voice. These features are contrasting to the inner voice, which moves around the tonic mainly in steps. I take time to reach the high notes in this passage and play the large leaps carefully by pressing down the key in a slower fashion.

The Allemande is embellished with a variety of ornaments. At the start of the movement, the downbeat played with *pincé* in the left hand is slightly longer with many alternations.¹⁵⁴ I also emphasize the beginning of the alternations by playing it longer. This single note is significant as it sets the tone of the movement and the rest of the suite. In contrast, I play the *pincé* ornament found in m. 2 in the bass quickly and short with one alternation.

Each of three consecutive Fs in the top voice of m. 4 is embellished with a different ornament: *pincé et port de voix*, *doublé*, and *cadence* respectively. Interestingly, the third F with the cadence and two written out notes, E and F, form a *double cadence* (see figure 4 and audio excerpt 1). Perhaps the reason for not using the symbol for the *double cadence* for the third F is that the timing of the written out *doublé* was crucial to Rameau. The same type of notation is found throughout the movement: mm. 15, 32, and 36 in the top voice, and mm. 21, 23, and 25 in the two upper voices. In the same movement, Rameau uses the symbol for the *double cadence*, which is found in m. 25 in the bass. Writing out the *doublé* is likely to be intentional rather than inconsistent in the composer's usage. Because Rameau always uses the written out *doublé* when the *double cadence* is applied to two voices simultaneously, I find it as important for the *doublé*

¹⁵⁴ See chapter two for definitions of the French ornament terms.

in the two voices to line up vertically (see figure 5). Whether the ornament is indicated with the symbol or partially written out, its execution should be varied. At cadential points, for example in mm. 15 and 36, I begin the *double cadence* slowly and gradually speed up the alternations. I play a *double cadence* with fast alternations at another cadential point in mm. 25-26 because of the strong sense of continuation into the next phrase.

Figure 4. Allemande, m. 4. Written-out turn.



Figure 5. Allemande, m. 21. Written-out turn in two voices.



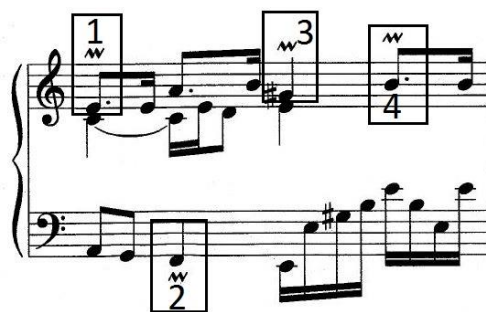
When the same ornament repeatedly appears in the close proximity, it should be played differently even though the difference may be subtle. The phrase starting at m. 13 requires a careful consideration. Each leg of this sequence is embellished in the same manner in all voices. By adjusting the length of notes, speed, and placement of emphasis of the *port de voix* appearing three times in the top voice, I attempt to create a flow that is organic yet sounds spontaneous. When the *port de voix* appears for the first time on the first beat of m. 13, I play the ornament

long, incorporating arm weight. Rhythmically in m. 14, the ornament does not require such an emphasis. I apply some weight, however, without elongating the lower-neighbor tone. Two beats later in the same measure, the *port de voix* quickly moves to the main voice without an emphasis. The corresponding passage starting at m. 34 in the second half of the movement is similarly ornamented. The difference between these phrases with regard to ornamentation is in the inner voices, which are more elaborate in the latter phrase. Nonetheless, different executions of the *port de voix* in the top voice are needed even in this texture rich in ornaments.

The *cadence* is added twice to the top voice one beat apart in m. 7. When the first *cadence* on D is played almost as long as the duration of the note, the following *cadence* on E can then be played short. The D is supported by the dominant harmony. For this reason, I make sure that the starting note of the *cadence* receives an emphasis. The dominant resolves on beat three. To create contrast, I play this second *cadence* on the third beat short, perhaps with two alternations.

There are several other instances in which the *cadence* is played consecutively. For example, m. 10 includes three in the top voice and one in the bass (see figure 6 and audio excerpt 1). I play the first one on the first beat short, emphasizing the rhythmic profile. The second *cadence* in the top voice is on the third beat applied to a quarter note. Here, I play the *cadence* for the entire value of the note, starting slowly, for the effect of highlighting the long note value. The last *cadence* is played short as in the first beat. I play the second beat in the bass with fast alternations for the entire beat. As previously mentioned, m. 25 features the *cadence* followed by the *double cadence* on the top voice. The first ornament is played short; doing so allows the upcoming *double cadence* in the bass to be heard clearly. In contrast, the top voice on beat four is played with alternations until it reaches the written out as *double*.

Figure 6. Allemande, m. 10. Four consecutive *cadences* in close proximity.



Even though the same type of ornaments appear close together, the performer may not be provided with enough room for creating variety. One example is a sequence starting at m. 26. The second beat of mm. 27-29 in the bass is embellished with the *pincé* twice. It is curious that the corresponding note in m. 26 is not embellished as in the rest of the sequence. Perhaps Rameau intentionally left the note without the ornament in order to prevent redundancy. The bass notes are constantly moving in sixteenth notes when the *pincé* appears. Therefore, the ornament is played quickly with one alternation in which the start of the *pincé* is stressed. Otherwise, the placement of pulse would be unclear. Similarly, the *cadence* appears three times in the first half of m. 34. The notes to which ornaments are applied are again fast moving sixteenth notes. Each *cadence* is played with two quick alternations. I play the third *cadence* on the second beat slightly slower than the others with stretched sound, matching the tone of the sustained sound in the right hand. Because the spaces between the notes are small, it only allows a subtle change of nuance.

The last measures of each section, mm. 16-18 and mm. 37-39, are contrasting in a number of ways from the rest of the Allemande (see figure 7 and audio excerpt 1). While the time signature remains the same, the texture becomes much thinner, using only a single voice, occasionally supported by left-hand harmony. The right hand is dominated by triplets, which

outline the tonic, A minor. These passages are rhythmically driven with a less lyrical quality compared to the main body of the movement. This type of contrast is similar to one found in unmeasured preludes. In such preludes, the contrasting section is metered, played in a more structured manner with a different tempo. It conveys a distinct character at the conclusion of the prelude. As a result, the tempo in this passage can deviate from the overall tempo of the movement for the purpose of creating a different mood, if the change in tempo is not drastic.

Figure 7. Allemande, mm. 15-19. Change in the texture to triplets.



The triplets are played slightly detached with a firm touch. The first note of each triplet set receives more weight in order to emphasize the rhythmic profile. The same gesture repeats three times in mm. 16 and 17, and in corresponding mm. 37 and 38. During the last repetition, the pattern changes and leads to a cadence. This change can be emphasized by using a *legato*

touch. Around when the rhythm switches from triplet to duple subdivision in the second half of mm. 17 and 38, *legato* can be applied. Notes played *legato* preceded by the notes detached will sound much longer, anticipating the final cadence. After the tonic arrival on the downbeat in the following measures, the remaining phrases are played in a detached manner. The last four sixteenth notes in mm. 18 and 39 are part of the next phrase, and are played *legato* and with *notes inégales*. The sixteenth notes descend to A1 in m. 19, which is very low for the harpsichord. Since it is the first time in the movement to reach this pitch and it is longer than preceding notes, I make sure that the note resonates well. A firm but relaxed finger can achieve such sound.

In addition to the change in articulation, I employ terraced and gradual dynamic changes in mm. 16 and 37. For example, I play crescendo and decrescendo within m. 16. When the measure is played again during the repeat, I use terraced dynamics playing the first half of the measure louder than the second half. In the corresponding measure (m. 37), I start softly and continue to crescendo until the final cadence in m. 39. I also linger on the penultimate leading tones, D-sharp and G-sharp, in mm. 17 and 38 during the repeat for the purpose of signaling the conclusion of the section as well as the movement. In the last two measures, mm. 40 and 41, I decrescendo and play with a slight *ritardando*. The last note in the right hand is embellished with a trill for the effect of elongating the note.

During the repeats of the first and second sections, I will play varied or additional ornaments with different dynamic shading and phrasing. While the overall character of the movement remains the same, repeating the material in the same manner would be redundant. Filling in intervals is one way of embellishing melodic material. For instance, from the beginning of the movement to the downbeat of m. 3, I make several changes in the top voice: filling in the third with a G-sharp at the end of m. 1, adding a *doublé* to the second G-sharp in m. 2, and

playing the first chord in the following measure without the *arpeggement*. Playing the bottom two chord tones and the *port de voix* together has an effect of accentuating the dissonance. Making dynamic changes in the opposite direction brings a different effect in a phrase. In addition, a phrase may be perceived differently when the dynamics are adjusted through a gradual or terraced change. The cadence in m. 25 with a *crescendo* prepares for the sequence to begin strongly. When repeated, I play with the opposite effect and enter the sequence softly, allowing the passage to carry out a long gradual *crescendo* toward the low C in m. 29.

The Allemande is one of the more substantial movements in the A-minor suite. Because of the rhythmic ornament I decided to employ, it is perhaps the most challenging and controversial movement in the set. This dance has a dignifying, grand, and serious character, which is brought out by a beautiful web of voices. Its distinctively French feeling is further emphasized by the *notes inégales*. Because it is impossible to determine the exact detail of how to apply the rhythmic inequality, performers should use their best judgement based on information we have available today. Although appropriate executions of ornaments and conventions are an important aspect of interpreting music, we should remember that the ultimate goal is to express an appropriate character, and not allow ourselves to be distracted by the correctness of notes and rhythms.

Courante

Following the Allemande is the Courante. It is a dance in triple meter characterized by the displacement of strong beats at cadential points (see figure 8 and audio excerpt 2). Contrary to the time signature of 3, most of the movement is written in today's notation, 6/4. In other

words, a total of six beats in a measure are divided into two groups of three beats. The Courante along with the first movement is more contrapuntal than other movements in the suite. This French dance is described as being somber as opposed to its Italian counterpart, *corrente*, which is fast and lively. The overall design of the Courante is binary in which each half is repeated. The end of the first section cadences in E while the second half takes the movement back to A minor. The Courante consists almost entirely of a chain of sequences. Five sequences are found in the first half alone. I choose to play this movement around 120 quarter-note beats per minute. It is important to play this movement at a tempo in which the forward motion and metric ambiguity can easily be perceived. I heard one recording that utilized *rubato*, however, the consistency of pulse and a dance-like feel should be prioritized before the flexible nature of French music.¹⁵⁵

Figure 8. Courante, mm. 1-7. Different groupings of notes in two and three beats per measure.



¹⁵⁵ Alexandre Tharaud, RAMEAU, J.-P.: *Nouvelles suites de Pièces de clavecin*/BACH, J.S.: *Keyboard Concertos*/COUPERIN, F.: *Pièces de clavecin*, CD (Harmonia Mundi, 2010).

The Courante has been performed with *notes inégales* demonstrated by numerous performers, among them, Angela Hewitt.¹⁵⁶ However, upon considering the subtle nature of *notes inégales*, I decided not to use the rhythmic alteration in this movement. Scholars, including Howard Ferguson, argue that the long-short pattern of *notes inégales* is subtle and that pronounced inequality in *notes inégales* should be avoided.¹⁵⁷ Parts of the inner voice in the Courante consist of linear stepwise motion in steady eighth notes, possible candidates for *notes inégales*. The opening measures include such an inner voice. However, at the tempo in which three beats per measure can be perceived, the subtle inequality would be very difficult to achieve. *Notes inégales* will likely result in a triplet-like rhythm, or a ratio of 2:1. In order to play *notes inégales* in these passages, one would have to compromise the tempo of the movement, by slowing down significantly, or the subtle rhythmic alteration.

The general touch for this movement is firm and strong to convey the serious yet beautiful, melancholy, and spontaneous character. The added tones at the beginning carry the French flavor. The first added note on the downbeat of m. 1 is played as part of an arpeggio. The following notes, however, are played on the beat. The *pincé* here is played concisely with one alternation; it serves to emphasize the main note. Starting at m. 5, moving eighth notes feature descending stepwise movements. I play this passage more *legato* than the preceding phrase. The motive introduced at the start is now in the bass (see figure 9 and audio excerpt 2). I voice the left hand and maintain the shaping of the gesture from the opening. The next sequence starting at m. 10 is played with several different articulations. As in the previous phrase, the opening motive is present in the bass, this time combined with another element of two upper voices. Therefore, it is important to continue to shape the motive. The element presented with the motive is a

¹⁵⁶ Angela Hewitt, *Rameau Keyboard Suites*, CD (Hyperion, 2007).

¹⁵⁷ Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation*, 99.

descending arpeggio. I play it detached, distinguishing it from the main motive. The two upper voices of the right hand are lighter and more *legato*. The pattern begins to break in the second half of m. 13. As lower notes are more frequently present, I play all the voices heavier, especially when the right hand is supported by octaves in m. 14. Each of these octaves is emphasized with weight since this marks their first appearance in this movement.

Figure 9. Courante, mm. 1-7. Motives in two voices in a contrapuntal texture.



All voices move to a higher tessitura in the second half of m 15. Sustained bass notes are a feature of this sequence as well as the opening motive. This motive is placed in the inner voice, and the top voice is heard predominantly in a stepwise motion. Compared to the previous material, the texture here seems more spacious even though the number of voices remains the same. I play this sequence lightly with a transparent sound quality so that both two upper voices can be heard equally and clearly. A sudden change of the pattern brings the first section to an end. In m. 22, the C-sharp in the top voice is longer than other notes in the measure and is accompanied by a trill, thus demanding attention. I emphasize the note with a long trill. This entire ending, mm. 22-23, is played at a loud dynamic level. At m. 23, a downward arpeggio and

port de voix are combined in one sonority. Here, the *port de voix* is played with the bass note, E, followed by the arpeggio.

I alter several aspects of the first section when repeated. Eighth notes that move at a relatively fast tempo dominate this movement; thus there is little room for additional ornaments. Rather, I focus on articulations and dynamic changes. For example, at the beginning, I play the inner voice light and detached, which is previously played *legato*. At m. 5, I crescendo into the next phrase whereas I taper off to signal the end of the phrase when first played. In the sequence beginning in m. 10, I bring out the opening motive even more by playing it with a heavier touch. For a second ending, I favor a stronger cadence. I play the trill applied to the downbeat of m. 22 stronger and longer than written. I also begin the trill slow and then accelerate. Those stretches of notes that do not disturb the overall sense of pulse should be acceptable when they are used sparingly.

The second half of the movement introduces several new musical aspects while also maintaining a number of previously used sequences. The second section begins in E major but quickly moves away from this tonal center in the first sequence. Another beautiful sequence starting at m. 28 is essentially the same as the one found in m. 15. However, the material here is placed in different voices. The long bass notes are now in the inner voice; the opening motives appear in the top voice; and the top voice moving in steps is placed in the bass. Even though the arrangement of voices is different, I maintain the light character of this sequence. The meter changes at the end of the sequence in m. 31. This cadential material has clear agogic accents and pulse of three beats per measure. I play notes with an emphasis according to the written accents. Beginning in C major, constantly moving in eighth notes in the following sequence starting at m. 32 are played lightly detached while the other voice is played *legato*. This sequence is

reminiscent of the one from the previous section, found in m. 10. Although it is not precisely so, here the outer voices are inverted to make the connection. The final sequence in the movement parallels the end of the first section, but in the tonic this time. Ties for the two right-hand chords in m. 44 are expected but missing. The last two measures of each section are primary locations in which the meter changes in the Courante. Playing a chord on the fourth beat helps create two groups of three beats, which does not agree with the previous measure. Along with the corresponding measure of the first section, the missing ties are deduced to be a mistake.

In playing repeated material, one can make changes in the way a phrase ends and another begins. In this second section, for instance, I maintain a loud dynamic in m. 28 at the end of a sequence as I intend to carry over the momentum into the next phrase. When the section is repeated, I convey the sense of one phrase ending by playing *decrescendo*. At the second half of m. 36, a new phrase starts soft but when played for the second time, it is played at the opposite dynamic. Along with dynamic changes, I add an ornament at m. 35 during the repeat. The last beat of the measure in the top voice plays C, B, A, B in sixteenth notes.

In addition to obvious alterations between six and three beats per measure that occur at the ends of phrases, some measures are seemingly ambiguous in terms of meter. For example, in m. 27 it is not clear which grouping of beats should be heard (see figure 10). The left-hand notes are grouped together in a manner of 6/4 while the syncopated rhythm in the right hand obscures the sense of beat. Because of its ambiguity, performers are presented the freedom to place accents to create their desired groupings of notes. In the top voice, I play the dotted quarter A, G, and F with slightly more weight to create the sense of three beats per measure. The left-hand notes are slurred together differently when the section is repeated. The following example shows

the two ways I phrase the measure (see figure 11). It is a simple change in articulation yet it effectively creates a fresh contrast.

Figure 10. Courante, m. 27. Different groupings of notes between voices in two and three beats per measure.



Figure 11. Courante, m. 27. Added slurs indicating two possible articulations.



This movement features a number of contrapuntal devices, which is unusual in other movements of this suite. Along with the metric ambiguity, the Courante is definitively written in a way that represents the French style. The movement is full of sequences in a denser texture. Its connective tissue here is the opening motive, which permeates the movement. Although room for ornaments is small and the same materials are recycled, the performer can still vary articulations and dynamics for an interesting, artistically compelling interpretation.

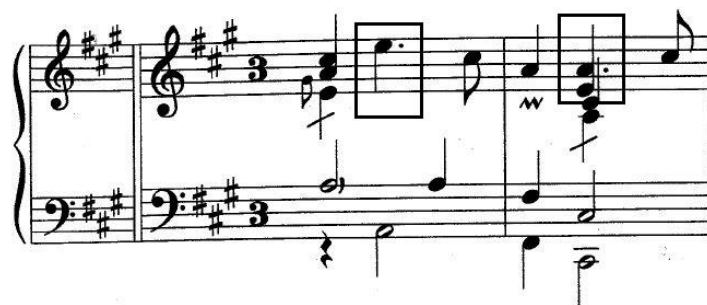
Sarabande

A *sarabande* is a dance in a binary design with a time signature of 3 with an emphasis on the second beat. The dance conveys a character that is elegant and intimate as described by Bond and others.¹⁵⁸ The melodic material is kept simple. The second beat in the melody in this Sarabande movement frequently receives the value of a dotted quarter note, creating a natural written out emphasis on the beat (see figure 12 and audio excerpt 3). Rameau's written-out arpeggios, sometimes with an added second, are highly sonorous and expressive, and distinct across the A-minor suite. Set in a major mode, the key center in the Sarabande moves, as expected, to the dominant key by the end of the first section. The second half of the movement, which is significantly longer than the first half, brings the tonal center to back to the A-major through tonicizations and voice leading. It quickly moves to the supertonic, F-sharp minor, in m. 12. A tonally self-contained sequence begins in the following measure in D major. The G-sharp-minor chord in m. 21 resulting from voice leading finally takes the passage back to E major. The Sarabande is written in a simple homophonic texture. Therefore, the two-part left hand moves primarily in half and quarter notes. The tempo I decided to take for this movement is 56 quarter-

¹⁵⁸ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 149.

note beats per minute. Because this is a stylized dance as previously discussed, a slow tempo is fitting. This tempo allows a clear pulse of three beats per measure yet ornaments can be played with expression.

Figure 12. Sarabande, mm. 1-2. Longer note values emphasizing the second beat.



Staggering notes that line up vertically in the score is one means of playing expressively. A movement such as the Sarabande that is slow and allows room for embellishments calls for this technique (see figure 13). Always playing the chord notes together on the harpsichord can be heard as a rigid, abrupt, and uninteresting rendition, even when the arpeggiation symbol is not present because the effect of playing the chords together is more pronounced on the harpsichord than on the piano.¹⁵⁹ In harpsichord playing, breaking up chord notes has a softening effect in terms of volume and tone quality. However, not playing the sonority vertically lined up on the piano is often associated with poor technique rather than expressive playing. Therefore, pianists should be encouraged to experiment with this technique for its softening effect.

The Sarabande is rich in ornamentation. There are a number of instances in which different types of ornaments align vertically. It is necessary for the performer to plan how these ornamental notes line up. For the opening chord, the bass note is embellished with the *pincé*

¹⁵⁹ Bond, *Guide to the Harpsichord*, 86.

Figure 13. Sarabande, mm. 9-10. Possible sonorities where the notes can be staggered.



symbol while the right-hand notes are arpeggiated upward. This right-hand sonority is essentially the *arpegement figuré*; interestingly, it is notated as the *arpegement simple* with an added note. In this situation, I play the *pincé* notes in the bass and E in the right hand together on the beat. The bass line in m. 9 features a *cadence* combined with a grace note (see figure 14). As pre-beat ornamental executions are acceptable, I choose to play the grace note before the beat and place the *cadence* on the beat as indicated in Rameau's ornament table. On the last beat of the following measure, the top voice is embellished with the *cadence appuyée* while the *pincé et port de voix* is added to the bass note. I play both ornaments on the beat; the *pincé et port de voix* is played while the top voice lingers on the upper neighbor of the melodic note. Similarly, Rameau adds the *cadence appuyée* to the melody on the first beat of m. 6, which is supported by an arpeggiated chord. I roll the chord while the right hand holds the first note of the *cadence*. Furthermore, both the *arpegement simple* and *port de voix* are given to the same sonority on the first beat of m. 18. It seems logical to play the *port de voix* on the beat followed by the descending arpeggio based on the melodic shape. The same combination of ornaments appears again in the following measure.

The expressive arpeggiated ornaments are written out in this movement. Along with the ornaments, Rameau writes “*harpégé*” (see figure 15). These arpeggios are filled in with steps, which result in beautiful dissonant sonorities. The melody is embedded in the midst of the

Figure 14. Sarabande, mm. 9-10. Possible pre-beat ornament in m. 9 and ornaments that line up vertically in m. 10.



harpégé, which should be highlighted from the rest of the ornaments. The non-melodic material is played lighter and somewhat faster. As the arpeggios are ornamental, I am not concerned about a precise execution of the thirty-second notes. Playing these arpeggios too precisely creates a rigid feeling. In addition to the ornaments indicated by Rameau, it is interesting to find written-out *notes inégales* here. They appear several times throughout the movement, and each is notated with a dotted eighth and a sixteenth note. The inequality applies to leaps as well as steps, which may be the reason for the written-out notation. I do not take liberties with the French Overture tradition here. As I associate dotted rhythms with rhythmic ornamentation, *notes inégales*, it is appropriate for me to avoid a sharp inequality with a long note.

Figure 15. Sarabande, mm. 13-14. Expressive arpeggiated flourishes.



There are two instances in which the same pitch appears repeatedly. At the beginning of the second section at mm. 9-10, B is played four times in the melody with varying note values and harmonies. Each time the note appears, it should sound differently from the others in ways besides their note values. One way to achieve an expressive melody line is to crescendo toward the downbeat of m. 10. Another possibility is to play longer notes with more weight, which are on the second beat of m. 9 and on the first beat of m. 10.

Other places in the movement benefit from dynamic shading and contrasts. For instance, it is fitting to decrescendo at the end of the first eight-bar phrase as the voices are descending. When the section is played the second time, I play the ending strongly. The start of the second section is played soft, creating a significant contrast between the sections. This soft dynamic level is because of a smaller range of notes and minimum surface activity in all voices. Another example is a texture change at the start of a sequential phrase at m. 13. Here, I enter loudly so that the second leg of the sequence, entering a step lower, can be played softer, employing terraced dynamics.

Even though the Urtext score I use does not include repeat in the second half of the movement, performers sometimes interpret that the repeat is implied because the lack of musical symbols are common in early music. As indicated in the Urtext edition, I do not repeat this movement. The second section is much longer than the first; repeating only the first half creates a better balance between the two sections. When a repeat is taken for the first section, additional ornaments can be played in the melody. Added notes include filling the third, E and C-sharp, in m. 1, and F-sharp and D-sharp in m. 5. I also arpeggiate the harmony on the last eighth note in m. 2, adding A.

Adjustment of fingering and omitting a note may be necessary in this movement. The notes in question appear in mm. 21 and 22 (see figure 16). The C-sharp in the inner voice is embellished with the *cadence*, which is tied to the preceding note, D. This ornament is seemingly impossible for either hand to play. As a compromise, I play the D in the inner voice with the right hand starting in m. 21 and pass it onto the left hand at the downbeat of m. 22. The ornament on the second beat is played with the left hand, which requires a release of the bass note in the mid-measure. It is essential to execute the ornament and maintain the contour of the inner voice because it is imitated in the top voice two beats later, including the ornament.

Figure 16. Sarabande, m. 22. Fingerings added to show the difficulty of playing the passage.



A *sarabande* is a slow and intimate movement. While it is important to maintain the pulse of three, it is equally important to play the beautiful flourishes expressively. As examined above, the movement is characterized by long note values on the second beat where the flourishes are often placed, and it is also one of the movements that benefits from the staggering of notes, which adds to the expressiveness of the movement.

Les trois Mains

The title of this movement translates to “the three hands.” As the title suggests, the crossing of the hand creates an illusion of having three hands at the keyboard. Here, we can see Rameau’s humorous attempt at a character piece. “Le trois Mains” features frequent hand crossings with the hands moving in close proximity. Although it seems fitting to play the movement on two separate manuals on the harpsichord, Siegbert Rampe suggests that the movement is to be played on a single manual.¹⁶⁰ This approach poses a challenge for a performer, perhaps more so than playing the movement on the piano. A great deal of care is needed in order to avoid hitting surrounding keys. I approach this movement with a tempo around 100 quarter-note beats per minute. I have heard this movement in a wide range of tempi, however, maintaining the sense of beat and character, I feel that the tempo I chose is the most appropriate for my performance.

“Le trois Mains” is written in a rounded binary form with a large amount of music shared between the two sections. The first section is further divided into three main passages, each with their own texture and character. The first is an opening melody with an arpeggiated accompaniment whose range overlaps the melody. This passage, dominated by eighth notes, ends in A minor without modulation in m. 19. The end and beginning of phrases coincide in m. 12, creating a section of music with an uneven number of measures.

This first section features two voices intertwined in close proximity in a high tessitura. It is also heavily ornamented. For these reasons, I play the section quietly with an ethereal quality rather than quickly and rhythmically. I make sure that each ornament speaks clearly and in a

¹⁶⁰ Siegbert Rampe, preface to *The Books of 1726/27 and 1741*, vol. 2 of *New Edition of the Complete Keyboard Works*, by Jean-Philippe Rameau, ed. Siegbert Rampe, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2004), xii.

delicate manner. Beginning in m. 11, the lower voice descends and begins to feature lower-pitched notes. Only then do I play the notes slightly heavier. There is a variety of ornaments, types that feature alternations of two notes, found in the first section. It is an opportunity to execute consecutive alternations differently, varying in length and speed. For those applied to an eighth note, one alternation may be sufficient. On any notes longer than an eighth note, more varied executions are possible. For example, I apply a long and even trill on the D in m. 7 while the *pincé et port de voix* in the following measure is played with a single alternation. A *cadence* appears again in m. 9 in the second leg of a sequence. Here, I play a moderate length trill starting slow and gradually becoming faster. The ornament on the third beat of m. 17 is seen less frequently than a standard *cadence*. I play the first note of alternations long and resume alternations fast and evenly to distinguish this ornament from the rest of the ornaments.

The second passage consists largely of arpeggiated figures with increased surface rhythm. The lower voice follows the contour of the right-hand figures, which are generally in thirds and fourths. This passage takes the movement towards the relative major. A cadence in C major at the end of the passage elides with the following phrase in m. 32. Here is a phrase in which the illusion of the “three hands” is most apparent.

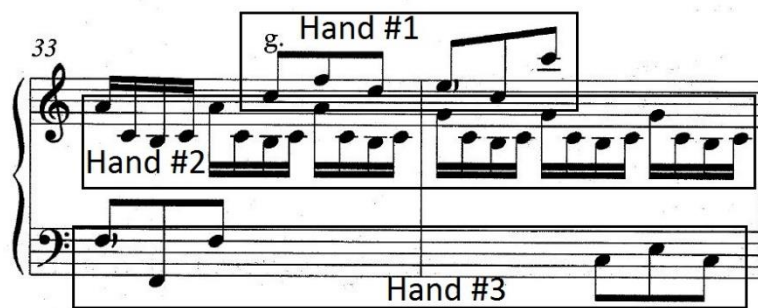
Because the texture changes significantly, I adjust the touch accordingly. The eighth-note figures are detached or played even shorter than those presented earlier. For example, the call-and-answer relationship of mm. 19-22 suggests two different articulations. While I play all eighth notes in mm. 19-20 detached, the following two measures are played with very short staccato. I pay attention to the sixteenth notes in mm. 21-22 so that every note is played short and even because the notes here are not easy to execute. The texture changes in m. 27 to a more

linear passage featuring stepwise motion. The linear voice in the right hand is supported by the illusion of two hands played by the left hand. The left hand crosses over the right hand repeatedly to reach different registers. In order to create a contrast, the right hand is played *legato*. It is effective to focus on delineating the two left-hand layers rather than simply to supply harmony with vertical sonorities. Here the octaves in the bass are somewhat heavier, and the left-hand notes played higher than the right hand are to be played gently but with a firm sound quality.

In the last passage, the right hand provides constantly moving sixteenth-note figurations while the left hand continues to leap over the right-hand figures to reach high and low registers alternately (see figure 17 and audio excerpt 4). Here, the right-hand figures are played with a dry sound in contrast to the previous phrase. For the increasingly active left hand that outlines the harmony, I use a combination of staccato and slurs. In mm. 32-34 in the left hand, for example, I slur from the first note in a three-note group into the second note, and play the second and third notes short. Measures 34-36 features a repetition of the same idea. All of the left-hand notes are played staccato. A figurative passage such as this can become monotonous. In addition to the change in articulation, I play with softer dynamics when the left hand crosses to play in a high tessitura. The sound quality here is bold with the left hand played with weight, and ornaments involve only one alternation and are crisp. When the right hand begins to descend in m. 37, I play a dramatic *crescendo* toward the downbeat of m. 39, in which the bass reaches the lowest note in the first half of the movement. During this *crescendo*, the syncopation in m. 38 should be emphasized as the emphasis has mostly been placed on strong beats.

A dramatic arpeggio spanning four octaves ascends to a high C, with a fermata in m. 40. The arpeggio is divided and to be played between the hands (see figure 18 and audio excerpt 4).

Figure 17. Les trois Mains, mm. 33-34. Texture creating an illusion of the use of three hands.

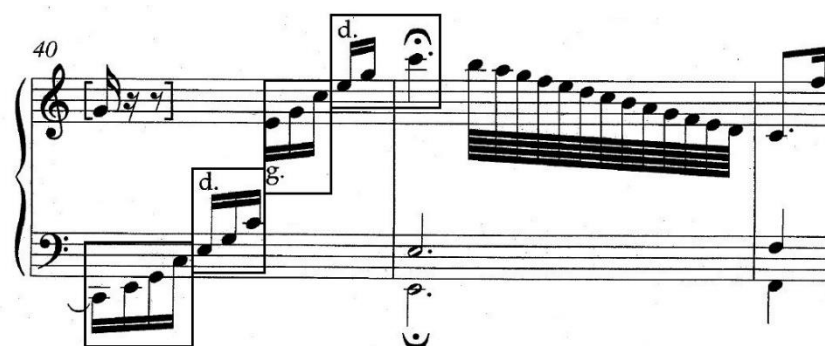


Despite this arrangement, it is important to maintain the feel of three and play it as one large sweep to the top. Because this movement is the only one featuring notes with a fermata, I would exaggerate their presence. When the fermata in mm. 41 and 87 repeats for the second time, I apply a long trill. On the harpsichord, adding a trill would make the note sound louder and prevent the overall sound from decaying. While the sound does not decay as quickly on the piano, this technique also seems fitting on the piano. Because the passage with the fermata occurs a total of four times during the movement at the end of each section that repeats, adding a trill not only serves to widen the variety of how the passage is played but also allows one to maintain the dynamic level of the note with a fermata longer as in harpsichord playing. The end of this passage includes a unique feature of a scalar run at m. 41 (see figure 18 and audio excerpt 4). Rampe explains that the descending run is to be played as a glissando with the thumb.¹⁶¹ The resulting sound using this technique on the harpsichord is transparent and crisp. However, I play the figure on the piano without using this technique because the run sounds rather heavy, losing its clarity of individual notes when played as a glissando.

I attempt to perform the beginning of a repeated section differently. The following are some changes I make during the repeat: the first trill in m. 2 is played short; the *pincé* in m. 3 on

¹⁶¹ Rampe, preface to *1726/27 and 1741*, xii.

Figure 18. Les trois Mains, mm. 40-41. Arpeggio played between hands.



beat 1 is omitted but it is applied to the E in the right hand; and the notes B and D, in the same measure, are filled in with a step. When the texture changes in m. 19, I change the articulation to gentle *legato*. Measures 21-22 and 25-26 are still played with short staccato. This alters the feel of the passage significantly. Additionally, I change the dynamics differently in mm. 32-36.

During the repeat, I play from m. 32 to the middle of m. 34 loud and the rest of the passage softer.

The second half of the movement begins in the manner of the opening but in C major. It soon introduces an F-sharp, or the leading tone in G major, then a D-sharp, which leads to a new virtuosic passage in E minor. The left hand plays constantly moving sixteenth notes, which embellish the bass notes E and B. A melody played by the right hand, also figurative in nature, is supported by the left-hand sixteenth notes. This melody arpeggiates the tonic and dominant chords primarily in eighth notes. The passage starting in m. 54 is a variation of what is presented earlier in m. 27. This time, the transitional passage, mm. 54-57, bears a bolder and stronger impression because of the octaves in the low register, moving in an angular rhythmic profile. This passage continues expectedly into a material featuring more figurative texture, following the pattern of the previous section. It cadences on E minor in m. 65. Because a significant amount of material is borrowed from the first section, I match how I play the second section with corresponding passages from the preceding section. Measures 44-48 are delicate as in the

beginning. Measure 49 transitions into more figurative passage, therefore the touch becomes more firm and dry. Octaves in the bass found in mm. 54-57 are played with much force. To enhance the effect and create a momentum of a forward motion, I release before playing the second octave.

The sequence of events found in mm. 54-63 repeats again in the tonic, A minor, following a new transitional passage. This sequential passage is unique in the movement; each leg tonicizes several keys including C major, D minor, E minor, and A minor respectively. In addition, the start of the initial leg is made ambiguous by the placements of cadences and texture in m. 65 (see figure 19). By simply observing a pattern created by the top voice, the sequence can be divided up in legs of mm. 65-66, mm. 67-68, and mm. 69-70. The left hand does not follow this pattern; the bass line matching the rest of the sequence is offset by one measure and begins in m. 66. Furthermore, a cadence creates an impression of ending a musical gesture even though the cadence is placed in the midst of a leg in this passage.

Figure 19. *Les trois Mains*, mm. 64-71. Beginning of a sequence contains a gesture, which is not included in other legs.

The musical score for *Les trois Mains*, measures 64-71, is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 64 to 67, and the second system covers measures 68 to 71. The music is written for piano, with a treble clef for the right hand and a bass clef for the left hand. The key signature is one sharp (F#), indicating G major or E minor. The time signature is 3/4. A box highlights measures 65-67, which correspond to the 'legs' described in the text. Chord symbols C, Dm, and Em are placed below the bass line in measures 66, 68, and 69 respectively. The sequence concludes with a cadence in measure 71.

Ambiguity is occasionally found in a seemingly straightforward, symmetrical nature of Rameau's music. It provides the performers with opportunities to convey different interpretations of how notes are grouped together especially when such material is repeated. For example, I play m. 65 and the downbeat of m. 66 with a sense of closure, as the measure serves as a "tail" attached to a phrase that ends at the start of m. 65. This "tail" is played with a *decrescendo* and with round, warm sound. Alternatively, one might choose to convey the sense of a phrase ending on the downbeat of m. 65, and play mm. 66 and 67 as one gesture. Despite the texture change in the left hand, a cohesive feeling of these two measures can be achieved by not emphasizing the first beat of m. 66, or by not using *decrescendo* toward it. The material for the rest of the movement from m. 70 is previously introduced. The returned material in the tonic is truncated, however.

When I take a repeat, I add ornaments and modify some articulations. The beginning of the second section can be played with notes that fill in an interval. For example, with the top voice in m. 44, I insert an E in the third, D and F. In the following measure also in the right hand, I play F and E between a descending step, E and D. For articulation, I change the combination of slurs and staccato in mm. 78-82. There are multiple ways of playing a repeated figure differently, especially in a figurative passage. At the end of the movement, the final chord is arpeggiated, and the bass note is accompanied by the *pincé*. I also make sure that I release the bass note, E, clearly before playing the low A to signify the end and to highlight the rhythmic profile.

As observed in the second section, the minor dominant, E minor, occupies a large amount of this texture. The relative major also takes part, however only briefly. Because a significant amount of material returns twice in this movement, it becomes especially important to highlight new and different passages.

Fanfarinette

The title of this movement is the nickname of a girl, perhaps someone Rameau had known.¹⁶² From the music, we can imagine this young woman was full of character. The mood of the movement ranges from youthful and tender to confident and robust, and it appears to be written in 6/8 in today's notation as Rameau uses "2" as a time signature. A significant portion of the movement is written in a homophonic texture. The left hand supports the harmony with blocked and arpeggiated chords. The texture also features some three-part writing.

"Fanfarinette" is set in two sections. The first section ends in the dominant, E major. The second Reprise features a tonally unstable area of significant size before returning to A major. The second half of the movement tonicizes B minor and then F-sharp minor, eventually finding the dominant of the home key. My interpretations of the tonal regions are discussed more fully below. Like the Sarabande in this composition, the second section is much longer and is not to be repeated. The surface rhythm is dominated by eighth notes, and syncopated rhythms are characteristic in this movement. It is important to keep a tempo that allows the audience to perceive the movement in two while feeling the syncopation. For this reason, I play this movement around 69 dotted-quarter-note beats per minute.

Unlike other movements in the suite, slurs are given throughout the "Fanfarinette." The slurs connect two or three eighth notes and are often combined with the *cadence*. One slur is missing in the penultimate measure in the left hand, which is supplemented by the editor in a dotted line. There is a tendency to slur a group of notes moving in the same direction, for example in mm. 10-11 in the left hand for slurred groupings and in mm. 38-39 in the top and

¹⁶² Cuthbert Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau: His Life and Work*, rev. ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 2014), 597.

inner voices without slurs. It certainly does not mean that only slurred notes should be played *legato*. Varied articulation in such notes benefits the character of the movement because of the relatively uniform surface rhythm. For example, notes in the top voice in mm. 30-36 are occasionally released before playing the following tied notes or played *legato* (see figure 20). Playing this passage with the same articulation throughout would sound repetitive. When groups of three eighth notes are slurred, I release the last note of a group before playing another, creating a small space between the groups. Sprightliness and the lilting quality of the movement are expressed partly through the release of these notes. This idea applies to mm. 10-11, 20-21, and 42-43. Not doing so would result in a rather heavy sound. The other voice in the right hand matches the articulation of the three-note group.

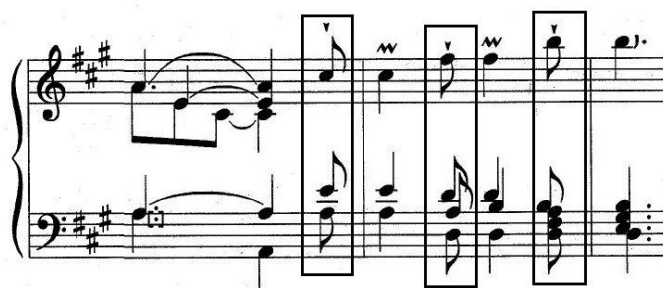
Figure 20. Fanfarinette, mm 31-34. Texture that benefits from varied articulation.



Another type of articulation marking given by Rameau appears in mm. 36 and 37. The *son coupé* is added to the eighth notes in the top voice (see figure 21). It is implied that the shortened note value also applies to the corresponding left-hand chords. Rameau's ornament table indicates that notes with the *son coupé* are shortened by half the notated value. Here, I play the notes even shorter to emphasize the effect. In addition, I roll the left-hand chords quickly, which creates additional rhythmic excitement. Even though this technique is primarily used in harpsichord playing, the short *son coupé* and rolled chords together set these two measures apart

from the rest of the movement. These measures build up toward the first beat of m. 38, where the sonority receives a whole beat. Because of the strong presence and climactic character of the chord, I play it longer than what is indicated by the notation.

Figure 21. Fanfarinette, mm. 36-38. The only notes in the A-minor Suite indicated to play short.



The left-hand part in “Fanfarinette” features three different textures. At times, it is part of a three-voice texture that supports harmony with arpeggiated chords. The left hand also accompanies the top voice with a single voice. Finally, the left hand provides blocked chords to the right hand. Varying the feel of a passage as the left-hand texture changes creates the multifaceted personality of the movement. When the left hand plays block chords, I associate the sound as being bold and strong. I play these chords heavy (with weight) and with a firm touch. When the texture is written in three voices, it appears much more intricate and delicate because only a few notes are struck at a time while conveying multiple voices. This texture is played with a lighter but firm touch to achieve a transparent quality of sound. The texture is thinnest when the left hand supports the melody with a single voice. As opposed to the blocked chords, the left-hand broken chords provide a buoyant feel, which are much lighter in character. I play these broken chords with less weight and place a small emphasis on notes that fall on strong beats. In addition, the note values in the left hand are the same or longer than those of the top voice. These

two voices are placed relatively close together. For these reasons, I play the left hand to match the sound of the top voice, which is lyrical and gentle.

The moderate tempo allows limited options for executing ornaments. Although appearing frequently, the *cadence* combined with a tie is played with one alternation on the beat. Similarly, the *pincé* applied to an eighth note has sufficient space for only one alternation. The *cadence* and *pincé* applied to longer notes allow more variety of executions. For instance, I play the *cadence* on the second beat of m. 43 for the entire note value while I play two alternations for the corresponding note two measures earlier. Changing the execution of these identical ornaments is appropriate. The two-measure unit found in mm. 40-41 is repeated with different harmonization. Because the repeated material is played differently, the result of playing the *cadence* longer is highlighted. Another instance of repeated gestures is found in mm. 23-25. The first two measures are identical with an exception of an anticipated note, E, in the top voice in m. 23. When the gesture appears for the third time, the right-hand notes are broken up differently. I play the *cadence* on the first beat of m. 23 with two alternations. For the next *cadence* in the following measure, I play the first note of the ornament slightly elongated as in the manner of the *cadence appuyée*.

A figure found in m. 16 requires special attention. The right-hand notes in the figure are a third apart embellished with *pincé et port de voix* and *coulez*, respectively (see figure 22). Here the *coulez* on the second main note is played before the beat, which is ordinarily played on the beat. I play the ornament, C-sharp, as a sixteenth-note value. This way of executing the ornaments is demonstrated in Couperin's *Of The Art of Playing the Harpsichord*.¹⁶³ Even though Couperin's terminology and ornament symbols differ from those of Rameau, there is evidence of

¹⁶³ François Couperin, *L'art de toucher le clavecin*, ed. Anna Linde, trans. Mevanwy Roberts (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1961), 25.

ornaments played before the beat during the time of Rameau. As Rameau's descriptions of his music are incomplete, it is acceptable to fill in the knowledge borrowed from another composer of a similar style.

Figure 22. Fanfarinette, m. 16. *Coulez* possibly played before the beat.



When the first section is repeated, there are several places that can be played differently. The notes are constantly moving at a moderate tempo as mentioned earlier, it does not allow ample room for additional ornaments. However, at a gesture such as in the second beat of m. 1, I can fill in the interval of a fourth with a stepwise motion. At the second beat of m. 3, varied articulations can convey different impressions. I play the first two notes of the sixteenth notes *legato* and the rest of the gesture staccato. When the repeat is taken, I play the entire figure *legato*. The ornament at m. 6 is played differently when repeated. While I play a few alternations on E starting slowly for the first time, I play fast alternations for the entire note value the second time. In order to achieve a wide dynamic contrast, I decrescendo at the end of the first section and start the Reprise *forte*. On the other hand, I crescendo toward the opening when I take a repeat. This approach creates continuity as well as louder dynamics.

Unusual notation is found in m. 18. The presence of a sixteenth rest in the middle of the measure should not appear simultaneously with tied notes (see figure 23). I play the first half of

the measure in the right hand as a dotted eighth followed by a sixteenth and an eighth note. The last eighth note then would be tied to the following eighth note in the second half of the measure.

Figure 23. Fanfarinette, m. 18. Unnecessary rest indicated in the score.



Opinions differ regarding the phrase starting at m. 23 (see figure 24). The notes in question are played G or G-sharp depending on the performer.¹⁶⁴ I play the note G in place of G-sharp as notated from m. 23 to m. 27 for two reasons. First, the performer should consider the key at that moment and adjust accidentals accordingly. The phrase in question begins in D major, resting on its dominant, A major, four measures later. Because of the local tonal center of D, playing G rather than G-sharp sounds fitting. Because the second half of “Fanfarinette” is tonally unstable with a cadence in B minor in m. 16 followed by another in F-sharp minor in m. 22, a phrase outside of the home key starting at m. 23 does not appear out of context. (Another view of the phrase is to consider it in the tonic, A major, oscillating between the subdominant and the tonic. Keeping the G-sharp would be appropriate if viewed this way.)

The second reason is the accidental added in m. 27. It seems that Rameau intentionally added the accidental because the note is previously played differently. Because the G-sharp is

¹⁶⁴ Tzimon Barto, *A Basket of Wild Strawberries*, CD (Ondine, 2006); Assi Karttunen, *RAMEAU, J.-P.: Nouvelles suites de Pièces de clavecin*, CD (Alba, 2009). For example, Barto plays the notes in question as G whereas Karttunen plays G-sharp.

included in the key signature, the addition of the accidental for the G-sharp would be redundant.

I would like to propose the idea that the arrival of the tonic is not until m. 36. After a phrase in D major ending with a half cadence in m. 26, the G-sharp in the following measure brings the passage back towards the tonic. A half cadence in m. 30 is indeed in the home key. The continuing phrase finally concludes with a perfect authentic cadence in A major in m. 36, nine measures before the end.

Figure 24. Fanfarinette, mm. 22-30. Passage where the G-natural and G-sharp are debated.

The musical score for Fanfarinette, measures 22-30, is presented in two systems. The key signature is A major (three sharps). The time signature is 2/4. The first system (measures 22-26) shows a phrase in D major (F# and C#) ending with a half cadence. The second system (measures 27-30) shows a phrase starting with a G-sharp (F#) and ending with a half cadence. Measures 31-36 show a phrase starting with a G-natural (F) and ending with a perfect authentic cadence in A major (F# and C#). The G-sharp and G-natural are highlighted with boxes and labels.

“Fanfarinette” projects a special character piece among Rameau’s works. This movement is the only one in the A-minor suite that is set in a fast compound meter in a cheerful major mode. Such a setting alone makes “Fanfarinette” stand out. However, the performer can further highlight the charm of this movement by reading and conveying all the different emotions expressed in it.

La Triomphante

This movement is the only one in the suite that is a *rondeau*. “La Triomphante” consists of a refrain and two couplets of contrasting characters. Even though the score presents these sections in the order of refrain, first couplet, and second couplet, the refrain also is played after each couplet, realized as: refrain, first couplet, refrain, second couplet, and refrain. Set in a major mode, the refrain is “triumphant” and festive, evoking of the sound of a fanfare. The refrain also presents a brief imitative figure at the opening, which Rameau uses to construct the rest of the movement. The exact contour plus variations and fragments of the figure can be found throughout the movement (see figure 25 and audio excerpt 6). The surface rhythm in all of the sections is dominated by eighth notes. Even though the movement features some imitative writing, the majority of the texture is homophonic; the prevailing eighth notes are often supported by chords of longer note values. Creating contrasts between the refrain and couplets is essential for an effective performance of this movement.

Figure 25. La Triomphante, mm 1-3. Opening motive in imitation.



The majority of the refrain is played with a non-*legato* touch. The loud, almost percussive character of the refrain calls for a pronounced sound even in the fast moving eighth notes. The shaping and articulation of the opening motive is maintained when the motive enters one measure later in the bass (see figure 25 and audio excerpt 6). I play the ascending motive with a *crescendo* toward the half note at the end of the motive. The notes that move downward are played in a less emphasized manner. I play the last notes of the motive consisting of octave leaps differently from the rest of the motive. The two consecutive eighth notes on the pitch A are heavier and more articulated than preceding eighth notes. I place a small space before the half-note A; doing so provides a unique shape to the motive and prevents the eighth-note dominated motive from becoming dull.

Along with the prevailing stepwise motion, two-note gestures appear in mm. 4-5 and mm. 10-11 in the refrain. To create a contrast in articulation, I play each slurred gesture with an emphasis on the first note. Therefore, a small space is inserted between these gestures. Measure 7 is the beginning of a new phrase. After the refrain has been introduced for the first time, the performer may treat mm. 7-8 differently by placing a small amount of silence just before the start of this phrase. Although this technique is commonly used in harpsichord playing and less often in piano playing, it is effective in articulating a phrase structure as well as smaller musical units. The bass line in mm. 10-11 consists entirely of quarter notes. Instead of playing each note detached evenly, I slur the second half of the m. 10 and the down beat of the following measure. This articulation contrasts with that of mm. 4-5 as the bass line in m. 5 calls for a two-note grouping created with a slur and a half note (see figure 26 and audio excerpt 6).

The eighth notes move at a lively tempo, which allows only a small amount of space between notes for ornaments. For this reason, I play the *cadence* starting on the main note and on

Figure 26. La Triomphante, mm. 10-12. A slur added to show varied articulation.



the beat, rather than on the upper neighbor suggested by Rameau. (Coincidentally, the *cadence* in this movement is always applied to eighth notes in a descending stepwise motion. The main-note trill in this type of circumstance is supported by scholars, notably Neumann.¹⁶⁵) The ornament then consists of three notes only: the main note, its upper neighbor, and a return to the main note. The clarity of articulated sound is especially effective in this movement, and playing less ornamental notes here appears fitting rather than crowding the eighth-note runs. As seen in other movements, a written-out turn appears in the top voice of mm. 2 and 8. The main notes of these ornaments are dotted eighth notes, allowing the upper-neighbor start. Other instances of the *cadence* appear on quarter or longer notes, which also allow the upper-neighbor start and a variety of executions.

In contrast to the refrain, the beginning of the first couplet features more sustained writing in the top voice. The opening figure from the refrain returns modified, however, maintaining the pattern of the lower voice entering one measure later (see figure 27). Beginning in m. 17, the texture becomes homophonic. The top voice features arpeggiated figures based on the opening figure while the left hand provides long sustained blocked chords.

Ornamentation in the first couplet is scarce. However, it does introduce the *coulez* and

¹⁶⁵ Frederick Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1993), 386.

Figure 27. La Triomphante, mm. 13-16. Imitation in the first couplet similar to the refrain.



port de voix, which are not heard in the refrain. At the end of the section in m. 23, I play the E-major chord in the right hand arpeggiated including the *port de voix* on the beat. This arpeggio moves downward because, first, I wish to immediately resolve the *port de voix* upward and, second, the downward motion is a contrast to the left-hand figure. In addition, arpeggiating the chord highlights the difference from previously played blocked chords in the left hand.

The top voice at the beginning of this first couplet, consisting of longer note values is also one of the distinct features of the couplet and should be highlighted. I play a majority of the couplet with a *legato* touch and a sustained quality while voicing the longer notes in the top voice. There is repetition of a pattern at m. 19 and 20. There, I play the first two notes of these measures *legato* and play the remaining of the measures detached with a lighter quality. I also play mm. 19-20 softer, creating an echo effect.

The second couplet is in the relative minor, F-sharp minor. Again, the beginning of this couplet is based on the opening figure of the refrain (see figure 28). As in the first couplet, the homophonic texture takes over at m. 28, this time featuring dramatic chord changes (see figure 29). The C-sharp major harmony in m. 27 moves to B-sharp⁰⁷, which resolves to E minor in m. 29. Curiously, the B-sharp⁰⁷ chord serves as vii⁰⁷ for both the C-sharp major and E minor chords although the vii⁰⁷ chord in E minor is spelled enharmonically. While keeping the two common tones, E and G, the chord changes into an A-sharp⁰⁷ chord. This diminished chord is another vii⁰⁷

to the following B⁷ chord in m. 31. This chromatic event concludes with the B⁷ chord resolving to E minor in the following measure. The mode changes back to major at the end of the couplet in m. 36, preparing for the final refrain.

Figure 28. *La Triomphante*, mm. 24-27. Motive in a minor mode based on the opening gesture.



Figure 29. *La Triomphante*, mm. 28-36. Highly chromatic chord progression.

Bdim7 (D#dim7) Em A#dim7 B7

Em

Rameau explains this passage in the preface to the *Book of 1726/27* as mentioned previously in my discussion regarding temperament (see chapter two).¹⁶⁶ The character and effect of the chromatic passage, which agree with the sprightliness of “*La Triomphante*,”

¹⁶⁶ Jean-Philippe Rameau, “Remarks on the Pieces in this Book and on the Different Styles of Music,” in *The Books of 1726/27 and 1741*, vol. 2 of *New Edition of the Complete Keyboard Works*, ed. Siegbert Rampe, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2004), 3-4.

originate in the quarter-tone.¹⁶⁷ This quarter-tone that Rameau speaks of is found in the B-sharp in m. 28 that serves a dual purpose as a member of both B-sharp^{o7} and D-sharp^{o7}. Because the diatonic and chromatic half steps are distinguished for having two different sizes, and two consecutive half steps are a combination of diatonic and chromatic half steps, arranging chords that results in two consecutive diatonic half steps creates an unexpected effect.¹⁶⁸ The B-sharp in m. 28 is a diatonic half step away from C-sharp in m. 27 in relation to C-sharp major. Likewise, C (enharmonically spelled as B-sharp) again in m. 28 is a diatonic half step away from B in relation to E minor in the following measure. Theoretically, the two consecutive diatonic half steps, B-C/B-sharp-C-sharp, form a whole step, however, a quarter tone larger. Of course in practice, the B-sharp and the C are identical on the keyboard, and there is no place for the quarter tone. Rameau argues that the audience through reason is able to perceive this discord in relation to tonality.¹⁶⁹ Understanding the effect of placing such chord progression in this movement is still relevant to us today even though we are surrounded by the sound of the equal temperament on the piano. The pianist can make an attempt to simulate the effect based on the understanding of Rameau's intention.

The second couplet is the only section set in a minor mode. After a repeat of the refrain, playing this couplet dark and *legato* is an effective means of creating a contrast. For the purpose of matching the character of the couplet, the *pincé et port de voix* at the beginning of m. 25 is played slow and *legato*. Because the *cadences* that appear several times during this couplet are applied to an eighth note and are mechanically difficult to play slowly, I avoid emphasizing the starting note of each ornament in order to achieve a smooth, dark impression. Measure 27 is the

¹⁶⁷ Rameau, "Remarks on the Pieces," 3.

¹⁶⁸ Rameau, "Remarks on the Pieces," 4.

¹⁶⁹ Rameau, "Remarks on the Pieces," 4.

end of a phrase; I play the left-hand rising and falling arpeggio pattern with a pronounced swell. This distinguishes the phrase, mm. 24-27, from the following one.

The passage from m. 28 to m. 31 features a highly expressive chromatic chord progression as discussed above. I begin the passage softer than the preceding measure. The B-sharp^{o7} in m. 28 resolves enharmonically in m. 29 to E minor, and m. 29 is played with a softer dynamic. The following measures feature a long *crescendo* toward the F-sharp at the end of m. 33. Although the B⁷ chord in m. 31 resolves expectedly to E minor, a continuing buildup of dynamics is fitting in this passage; the top voice continues to rise in a form of broken chords without resting on the E-minor chord. In addition, syncopation across barlines contributes to the momentum towards the high F-sharp. Larger intervals are found in this passage, which are emphasized by playing them detached. Following the top of the melodic contour, the top voice descends scalewise to an E, this time more conclusively in m. 36.

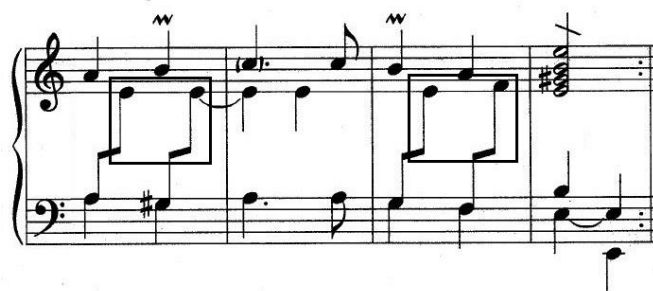
Throughout this passage, I pay special attention to the linear motion created by chromatic chords in the left hand. Highlighting continuity of the chord progression as well as dissonance maximizes the effect of this unique passage. Before returning to the refrain for the last time, I place a small amount of silence at the end of this couplet. In a texture dominantly played *legato*, a sudden change in articulation brings attention to and prepares for the start of the refrain.

To effectively perform “La Triomphante,” the pianist should bring out the shape of the opening motive as a means of unifying the movement. As in a typical *rondeau*, creating contrasts between the refrain and couplets is essential. Small gestures need careful treatment especially when the writing is predominantly figurative such as in this movement. The performer can use varied articulations to avoid a redundant feeling.

Gavotte

The Gavotte that concludes the A-minor suite consists of a theme and six variations. It is one of the longer movements in the suite and is highly virtuosic. Written in a binary design, each variation presents a new texture while maintaining the general melodic shape, the harmonic progression, or both. For convenience, I refer to the top voice, or the melody, of the Gavotte as a theme, differentiating it from the harmony. The theme of the Gavotte is quite simple; the largely homophonic texture that accompanies it allows ample room for embellishments. The theme begins on a downbeat, contrary to the typical design of a *gavotte* that begins on the upbeat, consisting of two notes of the same value. This may be because of an Italian influence; the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century *gavotte* frequently begins either on a downbeat or with an eighth-note pick up.¹⁷⁰ Occasionally, the inner voice is displaced by half a beat as in mm. 5-7 (see figure 30 and audio excerpt 7). The second phrase from m. 9 to m. 16 is supported by broken chords in the left hand.

Figure 30. Gavotte, theme, mm. 5-8. Inner voice displaced by half a beat.



¹⁷⁰ Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J.S. Bach* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991), 55, quoted in Schultz, *Performing French Classical Music*, 81-82.

I made a choice to repeat the second half of the theme. This approach allows me to embellish the section with additional ornaments during the repeat. Each of the six variations include a repeat sign at the end. Even though the Urtext edition is not marked as such, I follow the repeat pattern of the variations and apply it to the theme.

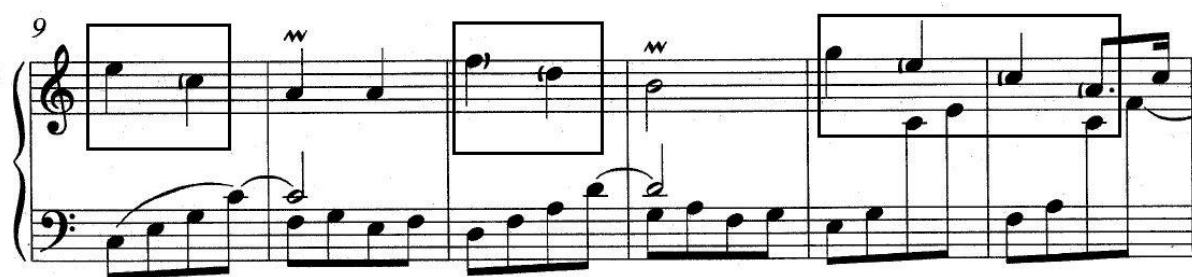
I believe that the tempo can vary between the variations. The differences can contribute to creating a distinct character for the theme and each variation. I take a relaxed but sturdy tempo of 69 quarter-note beats per minute for the theme. At this tempo, the strong-weak pattern of the meter is brought out clearly, and ornaments can be added without sounding hurried.

Describing the character of the theme as serious and lugubrious with a bit of charm combined with the moving quality of a dance, I play the theme *legato* with a soft dynamic. The opening notes may even be slightly overlapping. Ornaments here often appear in both hands simultaneously or in close proximity. It is important to consider how such vertically stacked ornaments are executed in a way that each one projects clearly. For example, both the top and middle voices have a trill on the second beat of m. 3. Because these ornaments are of the same type, they are played at the same time with the same number of alternations. Different types of ornaments require finer adjustments as to how they line up. I play the repeat of the first eight measures louder with some additional ornaments. I insert sixteenth notes, C and B, following the A on the second beat in m. 2. A turn is applied to the second C on the top voice in m. 6. Finally, the downward arpeggio at the end of the phrase is played upward, this time a little faster.

The second half of the theme is more involved in terms of melodic and harmonic activity and texture. The bass line becomes more active, providing constantly moving eighth notes. In turn, the texture becomes thinner, as the inner voice for the most part does not return until m. 15. I play this passage with a brighter tone than the previous phrase because the passage begins in C

major, and the texture is more open. The ornaments in this section provide interest. In m. 11, the *pincé* and *coulez* appear side by side with the main notes a third apart (see figure 31). Here, I play the *coulez* on the second beat of m. 11 before the beat. This written combination in m. 11 would be a dotted quarter with the *pincé*, an eighth, and a quarter note. Similar patterns with the *coulez* appear in m. 9 and in mm. 13-14, which I execute as in the previous example. All other ornaments are played on the beat.

Figure 31. Gavotte, theme, mm. 9-14. Passage where Couperin's ornament can be applied.



The climax at m. 17 coincides with the highest note, the thickest sonority, and the most complex left-hand rhythm in the theme. The following measure also features the first and only secondary dominant, an additional flavor for the climax. From m. 18 onward, the texture becomes primarily block chords in the tonic. I play m. 17 to the end including the climactic moment with a louder dynamic. In this phrase, as mentioned previously, there are several ornaments that stack vertically. On the downbeat of m. 18, the *pincé* and *coulez* start at the same time. Here, the *pincé* features only one alternation so that the main note to which the *coulez* is applied can be played after the *pincé* is finished. The *pincé* needs to be short because the following ornament in the same measure in the bass is a *double cadence*. The *double cadence* with many alternations can be played at the sonority on the second beat of m. 18. The first beat

of the penultimate measure plays the *coulez* and *double cadence* at the same time. I make sure to play the turn at the end of the *double cadence* after the *coulez* has arrived. Lastly, a downward arpeggio is combined with the *port de voix* in the right hand only. It is logical to play the *port de voix* first, then roll the chord.

There are several places in the second section that are played differently during the repeat. The bass line with moving eighth notes is played with a detached articulation but without sacrificing the character. This time, I play all the ornaments on the beat. I also insert a slide between A and F in the top voice in mm. 10-11. The *cadence* at m. 12 is played short because of the activity in the preceding measure. On the second beat of m. 14, the *coulez* is replaced with a *cadence* with multiple alternations. From m. 17 onward is played softer. The *cadence* at m. 20 is played for the length of the measure ending with a turn. Two measures later, I add a grace-note C in the manner of m. 19. The downbeat of the final measure is played with the *pincé* in the inner voice. The ornament is played while the top voice plays the *port de voix*.

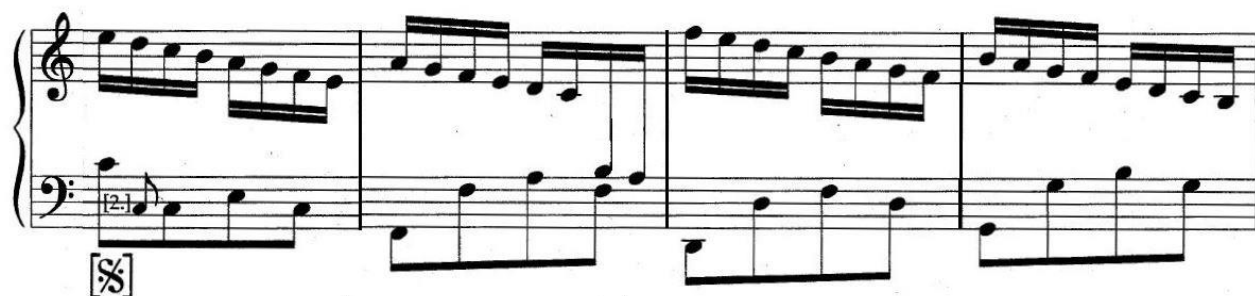
First Variation

The first variation is marked by a change in texture. While the theme is maintained in the opening, the variation becomes permeated by figurative gestures such as scalar runs and broken chords. In the first section of the first variation, the theme can be found in the left hand (see figure 32 and audio excerpt 8). Above the theme, the right hand plays ascending two-note figures in sixteenth notes. This pattern changes entirely for the second half of the variation. The right-hand figures become scalar while the left hand supplies the harmony (see figure 33). Few hints of the theme can be heard here besides the harmonic scheme.

Figure 32. Gavotte, first variation, mm. 1-4. Theme in the inner voice.



Figure 33. Gavotte, first variation, mm. 9-12. Change in texture to a scalar passage.



I approach this variation with a slightly faster tempo than the theme, 84 quarter-note beats per minute. The character is similar to that of the theme; it is serious, flowing, and melancholic, but with more momentum created by sixteenth notes throughout the variation. It is striking that the number of ornaments decreases significantly from the theme. For the opening measures when repeated, I place a slight space between left-hand sonorities outlining the theme while I play the top voice with sixteenth notes *legato*. Measure 4 features a change in the left hand, which should be highlighted with more pronounced, detached articulation. I apply a *coulez* on the downbeat of m. 2 in the left hand when the phrase is repeated.

In the second half, I utilize a call-and-response style of terraced dynamics. I divide the passage into three parts: mm. 9-10, mm. 11-12, and mm. 13-14. Each group features two one-

measure units. I play the first measure of the unit louder and the following measure softer.

Within the loud dynamic, all the bass notes are played detached. In the following measure, I slur the first bass note into the second and play the rest detached. Measures 14 and 15 consist of a long descending scale, supported by a cadence in C. Here, I crescendo into the downbeat of m. 16, emphasizing the arrival in C major. I maintain the loud dynamic into the next phrase. As in the previous material, the right-hand scalar gestures are highly repetitive. To avoid being monotonous, I vary the left-hand articulation. For example, the first note of m. 17 is slurred into the next, while the rest of the measure is played detached. In contrast, m. 18 is played all *legato*. Often in harpsichord playing, certain notes are stretched to create a variety of sound. I apply this technique to the first several notes of m. 19 in the right hand in which the same scalar pattern is repeated for the third time. The dynamic has been loud for some time. The first ending is played with a *decrescendo* so that the beginning of the repeated section is played soft.

When this second section is repeated, I retain the articulation but not the dynamics.

Rather than repeating the call-and-response effect, I begin m. 9 soft and crescendo toward the first beat of m. 16 using terrace dynamics with the division I mentioned earlier. After reaching the dynamic apex in m. 16, I decrescendo, thus making the following climax less dramatic. From m. 17, I swell gently louder and taper at the end of the variation.

Second Variation

In the second variation, the roles between the hands are reversed (see figure 34 and audio excerpt 9). The bass line takes up the active role while the right hand delineates the theme and supplies harmony. Even though it appears that the second variation is simply an inversion of the

first, this variation is primarily different from the first variation in several ways. First, the two-note figures in sixteenth notes are used only at the end of the variation; the rest is almost entirely scalar. Second, the theme is clearly outlined in the right hand throughout the variation (see figure 35). Lastly, the texture of the right hand remains mostly the same in the second variation whereas there is some textural variety in the left hand that provides the theme and harmony in the first variation. The right hand in the second variation plays mostly quarter notes throughout.

Figure 34. Gavotte, second variation, mm. 1-4. Scalar passage in the bass unlike the first variation.



Figure 35. Gavotte, second variation, mm. 9-12. Theme clearly outlined in the top voice.



Because the bass line is actively moving upward in sixteenth notes, which contrasts with the chordal right hand playing the theme, I approach this variation more aggressively than the previous one. The tempo is about the same from the first variation, 88 quarter-note beats per

minute. The left-hand notes are articulated and played with a dry touch. The right hand is also played firmly. When the first half of the variation is repeated, I play with a different character. I play softer and bring out the right-hand theme more while the left hand, being played *legato*, stays in the background. It creates a sleeker impression. In general, a character tends to be maintained throughout a piece or movement in the French Baroque style. However, the French style is flexible; as I have observed in “Fanfarinette,” which features different emotions, it is acceptable here as well to convey a different atmosphere.

At the end of the first section, I crescendo into the next phrase in the second section. Starting in C major, the left hand is again more articulated and firm. Unlike the first variation, ornaments appear consecutively beginning in m. 13. I play the *coulez* in m. 13 longer; with the main note, it creates a pattern of two eighth notes. Once more, I borrow Couperin’s way of realizing ornaments and play the *coulez* in the following measure before the beat. Until m. 16, the G in m. 13 is the highest note. The bass notes that play beneath the high note are emphasized by slightly elongating them. It also provides variety to the formulaic pattern in the left hand.

During the repeat, I supply more ornaments and execute some that already exist differently. One example of a different execution is that the *coulez* in m. 13; this time it is played shorter. The ornament in the following measure is also played on the beat. The cadence at m. 20 ends with a turn and is played for the entire measure. Regarding new ornaments, for example, on the second beat in the top voice, I add a *coulez* in m. 9 and a *pincé* in m. 17. Three consecutive notes in mm. 17-18 especially call for a change in either articulation or ornaments. I also play A in the top voice of m. 21 with a *pincé et port de voix*.

Third Variation

Of all the variations, the third variation is the most contrapuntal. Written in three voices, and in four at times, this variation maintains the outer voices from the theme. Interestingly, the sixteenth-note figures from the first variation are placed in one of the inner voices almost exactly until m. 4 (see figure 36 and audio excerpt 10). The inner voice begins to deviate from the corresponding part of the first variation, however, maintaining the general two-note ascending design. In the second half of the variation, the inner voice, moving in sixteenth notes, features more scalar motions although not as obviously as the first variation. Beginning in m. 17, the two top voices begin to interact with syncopated rhythms and more varied note values. This variation is almost totally devoid of ornaments. As it is intentional, I do not add any additional ornaments. The only ornament Rameau provides in this variation is found in m. 18. The tempo for this variation is slow around 63 quarter-note beats per minute, which is a contrast from the two previous variations. I describe the feel of this variation as heavier and depressing. Because all of other variations call for a faster tempo, it is acceptable to include a variation featuring a different tempo and character. Playing it faster, trying to match the tempo of other variations, would sound hurried and forced.

The first time through, I bring out the outer voices, especially the theme. When each section is repeated, I play the inner voice detached, at least at the beginning, which creates an even heavier sound. Some emphasis is placed on the left-hand notes, G, F, and E in mm. 12-13. This is the beginning of the two-part writing in the left hand, which also prepares for the expressive high note G in the right hand. From m. 17 onward, the writing becomes more expressive in the manner of the Allemande. The contrapuntal texture and sustained notes are to

be highlighted in the variation.

Figure 36. Gavotte, third variation, mm. 1-4. The most contrapuntal texture in the variation set.



Fourth Variation

The fourth variation stands out because of its texture. Except for two passages, the texture is sparse and requires the hands to alternate throughout the variation as Rameau explains in the preface to his second book of keyboard suites (see figure 37 and audio excerpt 11).¹⁷¹ A majority of the variation is an arpeggiation of the chords used in the theme; each member of a chord is repeated twice between the hands. The texture changes at m. 13 and again at m. 22. Here the music moves in parallel thirds, gradually thickening in texture. Rameau indicates the altering of hands with the direction of stems. Pairs of notes are beamed together in mm. 13-15 and mm. 22-23. These pairs in thirds and thicker chords are to be played with the left hand first.¹⁷²

By following Rameau's suggestions, the variation inevitably sounds rhythmic, angular, and detached. It is played around the tempo 100 quarter-note beats per minute, in contrast to the slower third variation. Playing the fourth variation too slowly would cause it to lose both the

¹⁷¹ Rameau, "Remarks on the Pieces," 3.

¹⁷² Rameau, "Remarks on the Pieces," 3.

Figure 37. Gavotte, fourth variation, mm. 1-4. Unique texture created by alternation of hands.



rhythmic drive and charm it offers as well as a clear pulse in two. As the majority of notes are moving fast in sixteenth notes, the opportunity to add ornaments is limited. Options for touch and articulation are also narrowed because of the hand alternating attacks required for this variation. Within these limitations, I adjust the articulation and dynamics to create excitement. For instance, I cut back and then swell at the start of a new phrase in m. 5, and taper at m. 8. Following this *decrescendo*, I play the repeat of the opening eight bars softer. Pairs of two or more notes are shared between hands in mm. 13-16 and mm. 22-24. I play the second sonority of a pair slurred into the first sonority of the next pair (see figure 38). This difference in articulation stands out in the midst of the similarly played passages. During the repeat, however, the pairs are played equally detached. In addition, I voice certain notes in the left hand such as G, G-sharp, and A in m. 18 as they serve as a bass line.

Fifth Variation

The last two variations in the set are the most virtuosic. They feature not only fast moving notes but also a wider range of notes in a single gesture. An example can be found in m. 17 of the fifth variation in which the first half of the measure spans a compound sixth (see figure 39). The tempo I chose for this variation is around 92 quarter-note beats per minute. The tempo

allows the excitement to come through, yet each note can speak clearly.

Figure 38. Gavotte, fourth variation, mm. 13-16. Slurs added to indicate a possible articulation. Directions of stems on the top staff show the alternation of hands.

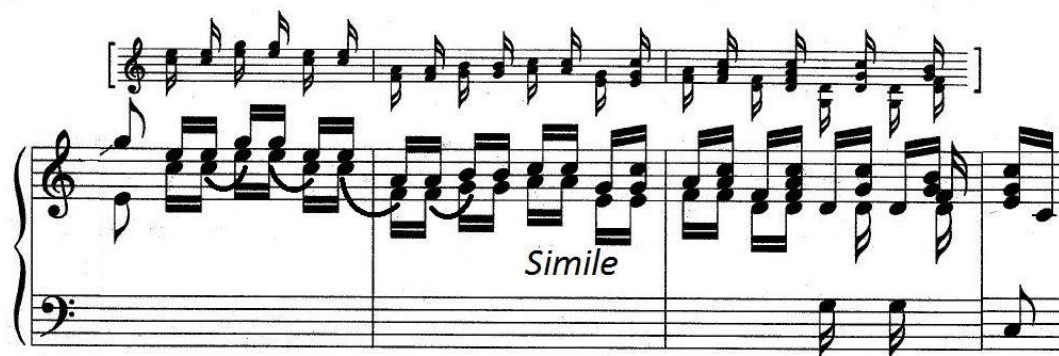
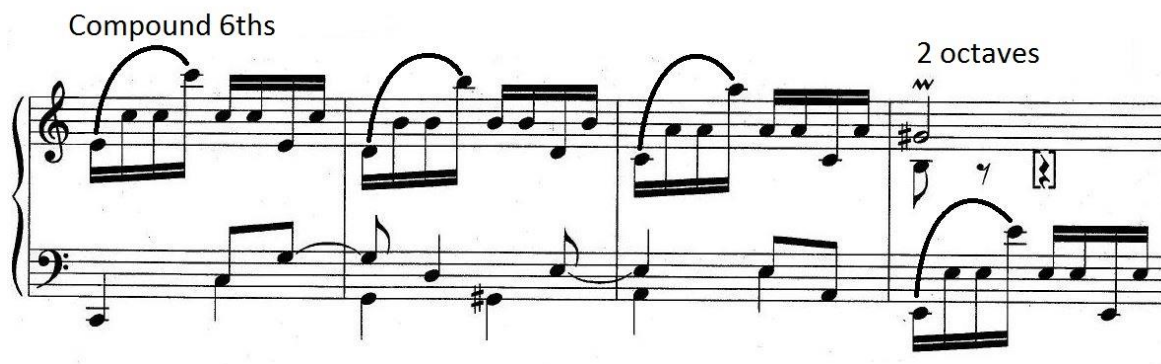


Figure 39. Gavotte, fifth variation, mm. 17-20. Slurs added to show large intervals within a single voice.



In this variation, the right hand plays a broken-chord figuration in sixteenth notes in which the theme is well-hidden (see figure 40 and audio excerpt 12). It is appropriate to keep the theme hidden and not to voice it in the opening of this variation. Playing the notes that constitute the theme longer or louder interferes with the flow of the virtuosic right hand. Because the top voice is constantly moving, the opportunity for ornaments is quite limited. It is mostly played

legato but with a firm touch. Here, the *port de voix* is played longer. When m. 4 is played for the second time, I play the main note of the *port de voix* on the second beat. Terraced dynamics are also used at the repeat of the second half. Measures 9-10 and mm. 11-12 are played loud and soft respectively. Even though the resulting sound is dramatic, I play *subito piano* when the first section repeats. The technique is suitable for the variation of the virtuosic nature.

Figure 40. Gavotte, fifth variation, mm. 1-4. Theme embedded in the texture.



Sixth Variation

The last variation features the inversion of texture from the fifth variation between the hands. Here, the broken-chord figure in sixteenth notes is placed in the left hand, and the theme set in a chordal texture appears in the right hand (see figure 41 and audio excerpt 13). The tempo for this variation is about the same as that of the previous variation.

I play the notes *legato* for the first and second sections played the first time. For the repeated first half of the variation, I play the right-hand chords detached and the left-hand sixteenth notes with a dry touch. This passage is also softer than the first time it is played. Because the majority of the top voice is in quarter notes, this chordal writing provides an opportunity for additional ornaments for some sonorities. While repeating the second section, I

Figure 41. Gavotte, sixth variation, mm. 1-4. Reversal of roles of hands.



place a *cadence* on the second beat of m. 10 in the top voice without the inner voice, C. After a long *cadence* in m. 12, I play a slide up to the G in the following measure. A *port de voix* is added in the top voice of m. 16. A *cadence* in m. 20 is replaced with a *double cadence* in m. 20, as well as in m. 23. A slide, A to C filled with steps, is placed on the second beat of m. 21. The beginning of the repeat in the second section is played softer, with the left-hand part more articulate. When it returns to m. 17, both hands play *legato* again. In addition, I bring out the inner voice more in mm. 14-16 during the repeat (see figure 42). At the end of the variation, I *ritardando* at last, which is fitting after a journey of six variations.

Figure 42. Gavotte, sixth variation, mm. 13-16. Passage where the inner voice can be emphasized.



Finally, when notes in the accompaniment overlap with or are played close to the inner voice, some may find it easier to take such notes with the right hand. For example, I play the E in the low voice in m. 6 with the right hand as the note overlaps with the right-hand chords (see figure 43 and audio excerpt 13).

Figure 43. Gavotte, sixth variation, mm. 6-8. Left-hand notes possibly played with the right hand.



In sum, this variation set features a wide range of textures and characters. Interestingly, the first two variations can be considered to be a pair as well as the last two variations because of their textures. The third and fourth variations stand on their own, creating a three-part design to the set of variations. As in a typical variation set, each variation is self-contained, and maintains the theme fairly closely either melodically, harmonically, or both. The primary goal in this movement is to highlight differences between the variations particularly their characters. Frequently, it was not an option to vary repeated materials with ornaments, in which the performer is encouraged to explore other means of creating changes.

In my interpretation, I attempted to incorporate harpsichord techniques that may not typically be used in piano playing while employing the full capacities of the modern piano. Even though I paid attention to instructions given by Rameau and his contemporaries in the use of ornaments and other musical ideas, there are many decisions that need to be made by the performer, including tempo and articulation. I attempted to do so by examining the character and

style of each movement of the A-minor suite. In the next chapter, I will discuss topics for further studies, and provide reflections and a conclusion to my study.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY; SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Conclusion

Upon examination and comparison of piano and harpsichord playing, performance practices, and the A-minor suite, I maintain the idea that this composition can be successfully performed on the piano without sacrificing its essence. Even though the choice of instrument is left to the performer, he or she should consider and take advantage of the fact that the piano is widely available today. Of course, there is no way to be exactly certain of Rameau's intention for this A-minor suite and how the suite was performed during Rameau's time. Despite the effort of the eighteenth-century composers and scholars, including Rameau, to convey musical ideas through text and symbols, written words are simply inadequate. I hope that my audio recording supplements this writing appropriately in order to demonstrate my interpretation clearly. My next project is to record the A-minor suite on the piano in its entirety.

Summary of Chapters

In chapter one, I have outlined my intent and the sources that I consulted for this study, which are drawn from keyboard literature, harpsichord playing, keyboard performance practice, and writings from eighteenth-century French composers. A number of authors agree that Rameau's keyboard works, the A-minor suite in particular, are suitable to be played on the piano. In addition, I mention artists who have recorded the A-minor suite. While the artists display a

variety of interpretations in their performances, I often made different performance decisions from them. These decisions are discussed in chapter three.

Through this study, I became familiar with the life and work of Rameau and the French Baroque style, which are discussed in chapter one. The world of French Baroque has not been explored as much as the German style for piano players. Therefore, I include a brief summary of musical characteristics of the French Baroque in terms of harmony, texture, genres, and other features of interest. French Baroque music reached its height in the mid-eighteenth century, and its emphasis is on dance music and character pieces and less on contrapuntal works. Even though the *allemande* and *courante* tend to be more contrapuntal, they are often limited to a few contrapuntal devices. A *rondeau*, which is a popular French form and is included in the A-minor suite, involves a refrain and contrasting sections. Harmonically, the French style is characterized by the use of suspended dissonances as the harmony is derived from the melodic minor scale.

A brief biography of Rameau is also included. Rameau was a learned musician, which sets him apart from many of the masters of Western classical music. Through professional connections, Rameau became a successful opera composer and eventually a court composer. He was also immensely interested in music theory and produced numerous writings. Even though Rameau is primarily known as an opera composer and a music theorist, he wrote keyboard works that are worth investigating today, including his A-minor suite. In addition, Rameau's personality seems to have led to quarrels regarding his works with contemporaneous notable musicians and scholars. Informing ourselves about the composer has an impact on how we perceive his music and interpret it.

Understanding both the harpsichord and the piano, idiosyncrasies, and performance practices utilized during Rameau's lifetime is essential for interpreting his music on any

instrument. Discussions of these topics are included in chapter two. The nature of the harpsichord is compared to that of the piano. The most significant differences between the two instruments are their frames and the manners in which the sound is produced. The piano's metal frame can withstand great string tension resulting in a powerful, sustained sound. The sound is produced by the hammers striking the strings. On the contrary, the harpsichord has a wooden frame with shorter and thinner strings. The sound is produced by plucking the strings. It is often described as an articulate, transparent sound.

Techniques involved in playing these instruments are significantly different because of their construction and thus their musical capabilities. It is a misconception to think that the harpsichord cannot be expressive. There are ways to create effects of *crescendo*, accents, and other musical expressions. The articulation and timing of notes also play an important role in expressive playing. On the piano, a wide range of touch and dynamic contrasts as well as the effects created by the pedals are possible. It is beneficial to familiarize ourselves with these differences and techniques in addition to learning about the sound during the time of Rameau. Ways of playing on the harpsichord may seem counterintuitive for the piano and conversely. Occasionally, however, harpsichord techniques can work well on the piano. It is possible to borrow some style traits of the harpsichord at the piano, even though it is undesirable to attempt to reproduce the sound of the harpsichord on the piano. The knowledge of performance practices is undoubtedly essential in authentic performances. Even though there are still controversies today regarding some practices, performers should be able to make educated decisions about their playing.

Rameau provided an ornament table with his own terms and symbols. Because other French Baroque composers often had their own ornament tables, it is essential that we consult

Rameau's ornaments for his compositions. This table, included in chapter two, provides twelve ornaments as well as notes on how to perform certain musical gestures such as arpeggios and tied notes.

The most notable performance practice of the French Baroque style is *notes inégales*. It is a rhythmic ornament where the notes are played in a long-short manner. *Notes inégales* can be applied to pairs of notes of equal length that are moving predominantly in a stepwise motion. Even though a composer may indicate not to use *notes inégales* for a piece or movement, no symbol is used to indicate where to apply this ornament. Therefore, the performer needs to find appropriate places to apply *notes inégales*.

Finally, I provide detailed commentary about each movement of Rameau's A-minor suite and performance suggestions for playing the suite on the piano in chapter three. Playing the piece on the piano itself is an anachronism. However, avoiding an extreme anachronism in musical expression and utilizing both harpsichord and piano techniques in conveying Rameau's ideas are ways to maintain integrity and authenticity of the A-minor suite. I discussed numerous possibilities of interpreting ideas from small musical gestures to the entire suite. Many of those ideas are what I chose to use for my performance. Others are not employed, although practical and worthwhile to explore. I also included figures and recorded excerpts to communicate my ideas.

The Allemande is a contrapuntal movement with a number of ornaments. It is one movement in the A-minor suite where *notes inégales* can be applied successfully. It is important to the performer to distinguish different voices and maintain a serious, dignified character. The Courante is also contrapuntal and consists predominantly of sequences. Here, creating inflections and changes between and within sequences becomes important to avoid redundancy. Also, this

movement is marked by rhythmic shifts between two and three beats per measure. Emphasizing certain beats can clarify different groupings of notes.

The Sarabande is a slow expressive movement. Longer note values placed on the second beat create a natural emphasis on that beat. Its slow tempo invites performers to add their own ornaments. In addition, this movement features ornamental arpeggios with added notes that are highly expressive. “Les trois Mains” is a character piece that utilizes hand crossing to convey the sense of three hands at the keyboard. Even though the movement begins quietly and delicately, it becomes virtuosic as the texture creates an illusion of the three hands. Distinguishing the layers of voices is crucial to a successful performance.

“Fanfarinette” is a specialized character piece in the A-minor suite as it features a variety of textures and characters within the movement such as gentleness and boldness. Adjusting dynamic levels and touch can help create these contrasting feelings. This A-major movement also features a passage in D major. “La Triomphante” is a rondeau consisting with a refrain and contrasting couplets. It is realized as refrain - couplet 1 - refrain - couplet 2 - refrain. This form was popular in the French Baroque style. Because the refrain returns several times, it is necessary to play it differently each time. The second couplet involves a chromatic passage that calls for a dramatic effect.

Gavotte and six variations is the final and the most virtuosic movement of the A-minor suite. The variations feature a range of textures and characters. In a performance, it is important to highlight those differences and create contrasts between the variations. In order to maintain an efficient study of the A-minor suite, I selectively analyzed and discussed material from each movement. For the musical ideas that I chose to discuss, I attempted to the best of my ability to communicate clearly and in depth.

Reflection on the Study

Learning the A-minor suite on both the piano and the harpsichord was a challenge. I had the impression that I was playing two different compositions. Whereas the harpsichord manuals are somewhat similar to the piano keyboard, the inherent means of expressions are different throughout the suite. Control over touch and creating desired effects were particularly challenging when moving from one instrument to the other. I would often miss large leaps on the harpsichord until I was well situated and comfortable with the instrument. Finding myself playing “softer” or “louder” unintentionally on the harpsichord was also an issue when it was important to pay more attention to touch and articulation. Likewise, I would anticipate the plucking of a string when I was pressing a key at the piano, which of course, never happened and left a strange feeling. One major challenge on the piano was the execution of the ornaments, which are in abundance in the A-minor suite. It is important that the ornaments are played clearly, however, the heavier keys on the piano made the executions more difficult than on the harpsichord.

In addition, I experienced the delicate nature of the harpsichord during my study. The instrument often sounded slightly different because of a change in weather, temperature, and several other uncontrollable factors. I required constant assistance from Dr. Rebecca Burkart, my harpsichord instructor and advisor for my study, for making adjustments to the harpsichord. For example, if a piece of felt was out of place, it caused a sound to not dampen properly. Dr. Burkart would make adjustments; however, we might encounter the same issue in the next practice session. In addition, there were certain keys that went out of tune more frequently than others despite constant attention and care. Generally speaking, the harpsichord needs to be tuned

more often than the piano. Simply playing the keys too hard will cause the instrument to go out of tune, a common phenomenon when an inexperienced piano player attempts to play the harpsichord. A harpsichord player requires significant knowledge and skill to maintain the instrument, which is more efficient than calling for help from a technician when the harpsichord is in need of attention on a day-to-day basis. Most pianists, on the other hand, leave the instrument's maintenance up to a tuner and technician; the piano is quite stable and requires little daily effort in order to maintain a good condition. Moving between the piano and the harpsichord highlighted the differences further.

As a result of this study, I was able to appreciate the complexity of interpreting a composition in depth. It was an exciting challenge to explore numerous possibilities of expressing a gesture, phrase, movement, and an entire composition, and make performance decisions with a consideration of authenticity and harpsichord playing. My aim was not to reproduce a replica of a historical performance of the A-minor suite but to perform it in a modern setting while maintaining the authenticity and integrity of the piece. Playing the suite reflects my personal taste and is subjective. Whether one agrees or disagrees with my interpretation, it is an opportunity to consider how to perform Rameau on the piano.

Suggestions for Further Study

Rameau's keyboard works are overshadowed by his better-known stage works and theoretical writings, and his compositions in the keyboard genre are small in comparison. In this study, I was able to explore only one of Rameau's later keyboard suites. The composer's style developed and solidified after his first suite was composed, and Rameau's later works, including

the A-minor suite, are more “pianistic” than his earlier ones. Furthermore, each movement and piece of his keyboard works exhibits individual musical and technical challenges. These features cannot be addressed in generalized suggestions to be played on the piano. For this reason, studying Rameau’s other keyboard works and how they might be played on the piano would be a worthwhile project. Similarly, Rameau’s chamber music featuring the keyboard should be investigated in order to see if it can be rendered successfully on modern instruments. I expect the balance and interaction between the keyboard and other instruments to offer significant challenges.

Pianists who have recorded the A-minor suite in its entirety or selected movements exhibit a wide range of performance styles in their renditions. Additionally, certain movements and pieces of Rameau are overwhelmingly favored by pianists. Drawing a comparison between the movements and pieces that pianists tend to choose and those that are less favorable could add depth to the discussion of French Baroque music performed on the piano.

In my study, I have not addressed studies of Rameau and the A-minor suite that are not written in English or have not been translated into English. Although the body of such literature is not large, there is merit in examining it. Studies that lead to a better understanding of Rameau and his keyboard works should be examined and translated into English. Not only does it benefit serious musicians, it would also reach out to a larger audience to appreciate the keyboard works by the composer and French Baroque style in general.

I have discussed a harpsichord work from eighteenth century France repertoire that translates well for piano. It might be of interest to study other early repertoire of contemporaneous composers or different regions and genres to ascertain if there are more works that are suitable for adaptation while maintaining elements of authenticity. Of course, not all

works can be modified in a reasonable manner or will fit the needs of the pianist. For example, I suspect that early works that mainly consists of chordal textures will not work well for piano. However, further detailed exploration might be fruitful in providing both additional insights into historical keyboard performance concerns and their acceptable applications for twenty-first century pianists.

My hope is that this study will encourage pianists to expand their repertoire by learning the A-minor suite and further exploring French Baroque music. When interpreting such literature, I urge pianists to always consider original sources and how the music sounds on the instruments for which it was written. The understanding of the music from its roots brings the performance to another level even when it utilizes a modern instrument. While much has been written on Rameau's music and theoretical writings, my study adds to the small body of literature regarding the performance aspect of Rameau's keyboard works. It is also my hope that pianists will begin to study Baroque composers beyond J. S. Bach, G. F. Handel, and D. Scarlatti in order to broaden research and performance practices. As Thurston Dart argued, music should not be preserved in a museum untouched and in its original form.¹⁷³ Music should be allowed to evolve over time. Rameau's A-minor suite is one example of the French Baroque style that can still be "authentic" and musically rewarding beyond the instrument for which the work was written.

¹⁷³ Thurston Dart, *The Interpretation of Music* (London: Hutchinson & Company, 1967), 165.

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